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ABANINDRA NUMBER

The Visva-Bharati Quarterly



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Where the whole world finds its shelter.

The VISVA-BHARATI QUARTERLY is not intended to be an exclusive organ of the Visva-Bharati, regarded as an institution localised at Santiniketan. It invites collaboration of writers, scholars, and artists of different countries who, through disinterested pursuit of knowledge or creation or contemplation of beauty, are adding to the cultural heritage of Man. No particular creed is therefore advocated in these pages: nor any responsibility undertaken for views that may find place therein, except such as is necessary to provide opportunity for free expression of ideas.

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EDITED BY

K. R. KRIPALANI

The Visva-Bharati Quarterly

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FOREWORD

A word of apology is due to the readers, both for the delay in getting the present volume ready and for the many imperfections in its make-up. Owing to the uncertainty of postal and railway communications, the difficulty of securing art paper and the extreme reluctance (which in most cases meant blunt refusal) of owners to lend the originals of Abanindranath Tagore's pictures in their possession, we regret we have not been able to make the Number as complete and representative as we had hoped to make it.

We are therefore all the more grateful to those who did lend us the originals or the blocks in their possession. To Sj. Ramananda Chatterjee, Editor, *Modern Review*, we are indebted for the use of blocks of plates 14, 15, 22, 24, 25, 28, 31, 32, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 42, 43 & 45, as well as of plates facing pages 24 & 25* ; to Sj. Mukul Dey, Principal, Government School of Art, Calcutta, for the use of blocks of plates 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 26, 27, 30 & 41 ; to Udbodhan for the block of plate 35 ; to Sj. S. C. Sirkar (of M. C. Sirkar & Sons) for the block of plate 34. We are indebted to Sj. Nandalal Bose, Principal, Kala-Bhavana, for lending us, for the purpose of reproduction, the originals of plates 23 & 33 ; to Sj. Rathindranath Tagore for the originals of plates 47 & 48 ; to Sm. Jamuna Sen for the original of plate 46.

I cannot close without acknowledging my gratitude to Sjts. Nandalal Bose, Benodebehari Mukherjee, Pulinbehari Sen, Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee and Kanai Samanta, without whose valuable and constant cooperation the present undertaking could not have been accomplished.

THE EDITOR.

Blocks lent by the Editor, *Modern Review*, were printed at the Prabasi Press ; all the remaining blocks were printed at the Bengal Autotype, Calcutta.

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ERRATUM

* Page 24. Instead of the word 'method' in the sentence : "The Kala-Bhavana *method* has never had to pass through an experimental stage", please read *ideal*. For, so far as the method of teaching is concerned, experiments have constantly to be made to suit the individual requirements of the students.

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*Yours sincerely,
Hermann Roth Page*

CHARCOAL SKETCH BY JUEL MADSEN
December, 1924

TRIBUTES TO ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

By THE MARQUESS OF ZETLAND

GLADLY do I avail myself of the opportunity afforded me by courtesy of the Editor of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, of paying my tribute to the work and achievements of Abanindranath Tagore. On his ability as a painter there is no need for the layman to lay stress ; it is widely recognised, not in Bengal, nor, indeed, in India only ; but in the chief centres of culture in Europe and America also. And I always think of him not only as a painter whose works possess for me a special charm, but even more, perhaps, as an outstanding figure in a movement of more than purely artistic significance—a movement which arose in Bengal, away from a fashion which for a time enjoyed a certain measure of popularity amongst Indian artists, namely, that of subordinating Indian art conventions, ideals and methods to those of Europe. The fashion was, as it always seemed to me, an unfortunate one, for however skilfully executed, the work of the artist being in essence imitative, wore an air of artificiality and consequently lacked conviction.

My personal contact with Abanindranath Tagore was largely in connexion with the reorganization of the Indian Society of Oriental Art more than twenty years ago. That reorganization was merely an episode in the movement of which I have spoken. The Society served as a focus for the aspirations which were stirring in the rising generation of Bengali artists— aspirations which were fostered, and in no small measure inspired, by Abanindranath and other members of that gifted family. The exhibitions of their work for which the Society made itself

responsible, served as a mirror in which could be clearly seen the spiritual and aesthetic revolution that was in progress. Here was to be seen no slavish imitation of alien models, but work which bore the distinctive impress of indigenous genius. That is not to say that Abanindranath and those who had gathered round him were producing mere replicas of ancient Indian works ; far from it. The movement in which he played so great a part owed its origin to a reawakening of the slumbering spirit of India. That which was to be seen emerging from a period of stagnation was a thing of organic growth drawing sustenance from the soil of India, a living art in which were enshrined the ideals and conventions of the past, a fresh flowering of the ancient tree, but a flowering which was necessarily influenced by the environment in which it took place. In other words, the work of the school of which Abanindranath was a leading exponent enjoyed a measure of originality which was to be expected from those who were themselves the product of a dramatic phase of Indian history.

Judged by his work in this direction alone, Abanindranath may well look back with satisfaction over the three score years and ten of an eventful life, rejoicing in the debt under which he has laid his fellow-countrymen. For myself, I still picture him as I last saw him, a tall, handsome figure, a worthy representative of a gifted people. And may I add that I acknowledge with gratitude the debt which I owe him for an added richness in my own aesthetic appreciation of the world we live in.

By LAURENCE BINYON

I AM glad to have the opportunity of offering a tribute of homage to Abanindranath Tagore on his seventieth birthday.

I first heard about the artist about thirty years ago, or rather more, at a time when I first saw some examples of Rajput and other Indian schools of painting. These miniatures were a revelation, with their sensitive, delicate line and their lyrical

feeling. They had a kind of radiance that charmed at once. With the help of Ananda Coomaraswamy I was enabled to get hold of some examples for purchase by the British Museum. I then heard of the new movement in Calcutta, headed by Abanindranath Tagore, for the revival of these truly Indian traditions and the abandonment of alien methods and conceptions derived from the West. This seemed to me an admirable movement.

I regret that I have seen only occasional examples of Abanindranath Tagore's art ; so few, that I cannot venture to offer an appreciation of it. All the more do I look forward to seeing the selection of his paintings that is to be reproduced in the special number of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* ; especially to see specimens of his more recent work, as I understood that there has been a fresh development in the work of himself and of the School. Perhaps the painters are turning for inspiration to the amplitude and vigorous abundance of Ajanta and Bagh rather than to the exquisiteness—the sometimes over-fluent grace—of the miniatures. However this may be, and whatever weaknesses criticism may find in this School, what we remember to-day is the re-birth of the Indian genius in painting through the work of Abanindranath Tagore and his comrades and followers. And we felicitate him on an achievement which has enhanced the fame of his illustrious family.

By SIR WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

It is a privilege indeed to join, as an old friend and admirer, in the tributes to Abanindranath Tagore. He was the first Indian artist among my contemporaries and whose work was known to me. I think the earliest paintings I saw were owned by Dr. Coomaraswamy, when he was living at Campden in Gloucestershire ; this would be some thirty-five years ago. Later I had many opportunities of seeing reproductions of Abanindranath's paintings, and during 1910, when I paid a, to

me, memorable visit to India, I had good fortune to meet him and Gaganendranath at the family house at Jorasanko. Here I could go through many examples of their beautiful drawings and together we delighted in the fine examples of earlier Indian paintings in their noble collection of Indian masterpieces.

I was interested to see that however Abanindranath was determined to carry on the best traditions of Indian painting, he was too much a man of his own age not to be sensitive to the contemporary spirit. Hence he became the natural leader of the young Indian School in Bengal : indeed, his influence extended far beyond his own Province. His name became a standard ; no other name has stood so high as his in association with the painter's art in India.

What distinguishes Abanindranath's work is the combination of strength with a fastidious delicacy. It is a pleasure to me to join in congratulating him on his great achievement, as a fine scholar as well as artist, who has done more than any other painter to spread a wider knowledge of the character of the Indian genius, and to bring recognition to its contemporary expression.

By NICHOLAS ROERICH

DURING the present armageddonal days not many joys are spared for troubled mankind. Amidst the eternal values Art has a predominant place. Verily we blessed all who in spite of difficulties gather and create in the name of Beauty. They know that in this creative work is being born the majestic Renaissance of their Motherland.

It is our superb duty to reveal true heroes of the Nation. The coming generation should know precisely to whom it is indebted for its upliftment and why it has been privileged to have for its uses all attainments and creations.

The life of an artist is not an easy one. But because of this very eternal struggle this life is a beautiful one. For eighteen years I am connected with India and long before I already felt

the virility and essential strength of its growing self-expression. And now observing the glorious development of Indian Art, so manifold, I see how true was my first impression.

As a powerful beacon stands Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, as a guru of an entire School of Art. He blessed the best living artists of India. By his own untiring example he opened the gates for resplendent future.

The emotion packed in his paintings, in their imaginative genuine rhythm, is full of poetic symbolism. His paintings seem to say of their master : "We are the singing of his hand and heart."

My fraternal greetings to Dr. Abanindranath Tagore.

By MOHITLAL MAJUMDAR

I FEEL I have been greatly honoured by your kind invitation to contribute to the special number of your *Quarterly* intended as a tribute to the genius of Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, and with a keen sense of duty and great pleasure I would have sent an article as early as possible. I feel thoroughly miserable that in view of my present state of health and my inability to write anything decent just now, I must deny myself the privilege of making a contribution to your renowned Journal on an occasion like this.

I may however take this opportunity to say how great is my admiration for the genius of Abanindranath, who has always owed a double allegiance to the Muse—or, shall I say, to the twin Muses of Poetry and Painting. As regards his devotion to the former, I can say, from such literary sense as I may be credited with, that the creator of such loveliness in prose as the author of *Rāj-Kāhini* and others, has a surer title to a niche in the Temple than many a poet in our tongue who have claimed it by producing nothing more than considerable quantities of versified prose. The *Rāj-Kāhini* is to me a joy for ever—a cup "full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene," that leaves the mouth

purple-stained, and makes the ears listen, as in a dream, to the song—

“that oft-times hath
Charm’d magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.”

I have not breathed such genuine spirit of Romance—such exquisite poetry of “Mediaevalism”—anywhere else in the whole range of Bengali poetry. Is not that an achievement for any poet, ancient or modern? And to think, it is the work of one who, in the midst of more serious preoccupations with the other Muse would, in moods of sheer playfulness, set aside his brush for the moment, and toy with a quill plucked from the wings of Saraswati’s Swan!

THE MAKING OF AN ARTIST

By KANTI GHOSH

“... When I consider who is the person most deserving of honour in Bengal, the first name which suggests itself to me is that of Abanindranath. He has saved the country from the sin of self-deprecation. He has raised her from the depths of humiliation and has regained for her the honoured position which was hers by right. He has earned for India the recognition of her contributory share in all that Humanity has realized for itself. A new era has dawned upon India through a re-awakening of her art consciousness. And it is from him that the whole of India has learnt her lesson anew. A proud place has thus been assured for Bengal through his achievements. . . .”

RABINDRANATH TAGORE.

“It need not take more than six months to make an artist—of one who has it in him.” Thus Abanindranath the Acharya of the Indian Renaissance. He was talking to a group of young artists from Kala-Bhavana—his pupil’s pupils—and he was in a reminiscent mood. “I do not believe in too much interference by the teacher. He should only guide and never try to improve his pupils’ efforts. That would be fatal. Nor should he impose his own ideas or even his technique on them. They must be encouraged to develop their power in their own way.” He himself followed the self-same method with Nandalal and others with results known to all the world today. “But the pupils must know that there is somebody at their back in case anything goes wrong and that assurance must come from the teacher himself.”

He remembered how away back in his early twenties such an assurance came to him from his uncle the Poet along with the suggestion that he should write stories for children. “Write as you tell them,” he said, “and I shall lend a hand in shaping them if need be.” The first story was produced—the story of Sakuntala. “Rabi Kaka went through it very carefully. There

was a Sanskrit phrase over which his editor's pen hesitated for a moment, but it passed on without stopping." The story was approved and approbation coming from such a quarter was not a little helpful in making him realize his own power. It gave him self-confidence. Stories after stories have come out since then from the Master's pen—essays and poems too—and they occupy a unique place in the store-house of Bengali literature.

His art training, however, was not such a smooth-sailing affair. "Indian Art" was nowhere in those days. Ajanta was but a memory—when it was not a joke—and Ravi Varma from the South was sharing with the Calcutta Art Studio the privilege of satisfying the art-hunger of India through a technique alien in its origin, captivating to the vulgar eye. When Abanindranath decided to take lessons, it was the prevalent art of Europe that he turned his attention to. He had no other choice.

Two European teachers in succession taught him all they knew—drawing from living models and the technique of oil painting. He was advised to take up the study of anatomy after that. But he had to give it up after a rather unusual experience. The human skull which was brought for his study gave him a strange, almost an eerie sensation ; and the reaction culminated in a sort of brain fever. And for a time the study was abandoned. Then came a distinguished Norwegian from whom he learnt the technique of water-colour painting. A trip to Monghyr and other places with an easel and colour box in his knapsack in search of landscape subjects put the finishing touch to his training in European Art.

The training completed, he never allowed his brush to remain idle. Pictures were produced and admired but there was no satisfaction in his own heart. A sense of frustration was creeping in. "I grew restless. There was a yearning in my heart. I felt it but could never define it. What next, I would often wonder." Probably it was the creative urge searching for a

proper medium to express itself. At about this time there fell into his hands two works of art which opened before his eyes a new vista of possibilities. One was an illuminated set of Irish Melodies in the mediaeval style of Europe and the other was a set of pictures from Delhi illuminated in the late Mughal style with silver and gold. It was a delightful surprise for him to discover that there was no fundamental difference in their respective treatment. He began to search for some Indian subjects to try his newly found technique on. At Rabindranath's suggestion he took up the work of illustrating the Vaishnava lyrics of Vidyapati and Chandidas. The first picture depicting Radha going to the tryst was, however, a failure. The treatment was faulty and European influence had crept in unawares. "I locked the picture safely away, but I would not give up the attempt, I told myself." He got an Indian craftsman, an expert in his line, to teach him the technique of illumination work. Things became easier after that. He finished the Vaishnava *Padāvali* series and took up *Betal Panchabingshati*. Then the Buddha series and so on. The creative impulse had found an outlet and the Master had found a new faith in the renascence of Indian Art.

It was the most fruitful period of the Master's life. "How can I express what I felt during all that period? I was 'filled' with pictures—that's how it was like. They dominated my entire being. I had only to close my eyes to get pictures come floating before my mind—form, line, colour, shade all complete. I would take up the brush and the pictures painted themselves as it were." Even in those formative days, however, there was no lack of carping criticism. An eminent Vaishnava publicist came to have a look at his Krishna-Radha-series. He was frankly disappointed. Could that be Radha? Surely the artist could have given her a little more flesh and make her look plump and soft? "I tell you I was flabbergasted. But only for a moment. It didn't leave any impression behind." He went on painting pictures in his own way carefully shutting out all European influences for the time being. "Oh, those were the days!"

But those days came to an abrupt end. A great sorrow came into his life. His little daughter, a girl of ten, the pet of the family, was stricken down with bubonic plague which had been raging in Calcutta for some time. Her death was a terrible shock and diversions were of no avail. The obvious remedy however did not suggest itself to him. The suggestion came from Havell whom he met at about this time, and for the first time, at his uncle Satyendranath's place. "Take up your work again," he said, "that is your only cure." Chance had brought these two kindred souls together. The meeting, as we shall see, was destined to bring about a revolution in the cultural outlook of India. Speaking of Havell in after years he told his pupils : "He took me up and shaped me and he had my reverence all through as the Guru. Sometimes he would playfully call me his 'collaborator' and sometimes his 'disciple'. Indeed, he loved me as a younger brother. I love Nandalal deeply as you know, but Havell's love for me went even deeper."

Havell offered him the Vice-Principalship of the Art School only to be met with a prompt refusal. What had he, an amateur artist, to do with the administering of a Government institution ? And then what had he to teach and how to set about it ? He was never accustomed to regular office hours and—how could he work without his *hookah* ? But Havell was resourceful and things were arranged to his satisfaction, and Abanindranath was ultimately persuaded to accept the post.

The very first day of his taking over, Havell took him round for an inspection of the Art Gallery attached to the school. Havell had already had the Gallery cleared of all the rubbish it had accumulated in past years—third rate copies of old Masters from the refuse dump of Europe—replacing them by a few original specimens from the Mughal school. One such picture was that of a crane, a miniature, which arrested his attention. He examined it with his naked eye and then with a magnifying glass. He was amazed at the technique and the exquisiteness of the detail-work revealed in that small picture. He examined the

remaining few specimens and marvelled at the dignity and persistence of the culture that spoke from the lines and colours of these mediaeval productions. To Havell the effect produced by these pictures on Abanindranath was not unexpected. To Abanindranath himself the pictures conveyed a message : "I realized for the first time what treasure lay hidden in the mediaeval art of India. I saw too what was lacking in the *motif*—the emotional element. And this I determined to supply. That I realized to be my mission."

He took up the thread where he had left it. The first picture of this period was painted after the Mughal School. It depicted Shah Jehan gazing at the distant Taj through the embrasure of his prison window waiting for the final call, his devoted daughter Jehanara sitting mute on the floor. It was exhibited at the Delhi Durbar as well as at the Congress Exhibition. It was hailed as a masterpiece. Critics enthused over it and even the uninitiated was caught by its sublime pathos. "No wonder. I put my soul's cry into the picture." And the soul was still bleeding for his child. His great sorrow was the price he paid for his great masterpiece.

It was after this that Havell arranged for an exhibition of Indian paintings under the auspices of his Institution. An amusing incident occurred in connection with this Exhibition. Among the exhibits not a few came from Abanindranath's studio and one of them caught the eye of Lord Curzon who was a reputed connoisseur of art. Havell would not let his "collaborator" make a present of it to the Viceroy, but instead, set a price on it—moderate enough, but not quite so for Lord Curzon, it appeared. Rich though he was, Lord Curzon, according to his biographer, always kept a strict eye on his personal budget. So the Viceroy stooped to bargaining but Havell was adamant. Most likely, Havell did not like any of these pictures to go to a private collection out of India. In the end, Abanindranath offered the entire series to Havell as *gurudakshina*. Havell was overjoyed to receive this tribute to his guru-ship and he had the pictures kept in the Indian Art Gallery as permanent exhibits.

By this time, the neo-Oriental school had fairly started on its course and learners began to gather round the Master. Not many though. The Master would choose his own pupils himself. And he had an unerring eye in picking up the 'artists' among them. First came Surendra Ganguli, a young artist of rare promise which however was destined to remain unfulfilled by an early death. Next came Nandalal Bose, presently to occupy the chief place in the Master's affection and to be marked out for the singular honour of carrying on the torch to the next generation. Also came Asit Haldar with his versatile talents. With these by his side, the Master would work the whole day long producing pictures, making experiments in strange mediums, in teaching and in discussions. In the early Swadeshi days Abanindranath had been a sincere worker in the cause under the guidance of his uncle Rabindranath. And although for good reasons, he had subsequently cut himself off from the movement, he had not forsaken the spirit of Swadeshi and in this his new school he found a medium through which he could establish contact with its cultural side. The lithographic horrors of the Art Studio which flourished in those days supposedly representing our gods and goddesses were too much for him and he set his pupils to the task of educating the popular taste in this matter. A pandit was appointed to make them familiar with the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharata and a diligent search was started all over the country for old *patas* illustrating the legends of the Puranas. Pictures on these lines produced by his pupils during this period roused public enthusiasm to a degree undreamt of before. Of their merit the average person was of course no judge, but the average person felt nevertheless that here was something at last which he could call his own and that restored his self-respect. Books from the Master's pen and articles contributed by him to the periodicals dealing with our ancient art traditions had also prepared the ground for it. The Oriental Society of Arts was established under distinguished auspices and with a shower of blessings from

all sides, and, in the inimitable language of the Master, "Indian Art which so long lay hidden in the pages of the dictionary now found a place in everybody's mouth."

About this time the Master's activities took a new turn. Apparently so, but it was really the logical development of his idea of carrying Indian traditions into every sphere of life. He would swadeshize everything. Why not? The habits of the educated classes had changed beyond recognition through the imposition of an alien culture ill-assimilated because of its strangeness. He would change all that. Costly old furniture from Europe were banished from the princely house of the Tagores, their place being taken by sets designed by the Master himself with an eye to our traditional habits and climatic conditions and executed under his personal supervision. Architectural designs, house and stage decorations, dress designs, picture framing—nothing was too big or too small for him to attend to personally. The main idea was to have our newly awakened aesthetic consciousness directed to the right path to self-realization. The lead given by him in this direction is being loyally maintained by his pupils from their position of vantage as teachers all over India.

Indeed the Master's greatest contribution has been the creation of a school of artists to carry on the tradition. Some of these artists like Nandalal and Asit Kumar—to name only two—have already achieved recognition as Masters in their own right. The Master's method of training his pupils has been explained before in his own words: "No imposition, no stereotyped lessons—only remove obstacles from their path so that their genius may have full play." But the genius was insisted upon—and an all-round culture. Not everyone could face up to such insistence—only those who 'had it' in them could and actually did and those few have now the privilege of leading the art movement in India. Apropos his method, the story is told by the Master himself of how when shown Nandalal's "Uma's Penance"—a picture which has since become famous—he was tempted to suggest some modifications and how on coming back

home he grew restless ("I couldn't sleep the whole night") and at daybreak ran to his pupil's studio and saved the picture at the last moment from being spoiled. He had, as he confessed, realized his own error in time. "Who was I to interfere with Nandalal's vision? He had visualised Uma in all her austerities and his colour treatment was necessarily severe—and I was going to spoil it with my suggestions!"

He encouraged his pupils to study the ancient paintings, sculptural creations and architectural monuments scattered all over the country. These studies were intended to inspire them. They were never allowed to turn themselves into an obstructive element in the process of self-expression. His pupils were never discouraged from breaking new grounds. He himself had definitely broken away from Western influence and returned to full Indian expression, yet he "wanted nothing to interfere with or retard the healthy modern tendency towards breaking free from all fetters whether European or ancient Indian" as was pertinently observed by a Western student of Indian Art. He could afford to give this freedom to his pupils because he had "an assured sense of latent power and faith in the renascent art of India already so rich in promising buds." This traditional method of the Indian Guru has found a fruitful soil in the Kala-Bhavana centre of the Visva-Bharati where Nandalal Bose, chief among his disciples, is carrying on with devoted loyalty.

So much for the inspirer and the guide. The artist in him however has experienced, in his own words, "failure after failure" in translating his inspiration into form. "What anguish of heart have I not felt, and feel even now!" But perhaps it is the lot of all creative artists. The spirit is always limited by the flesh, the inspiration by imperfection. Only on two occasions the Master experienced the bliss that comes of fulfilment. "It was when I was doing the Krishna Lila series that I experienced it for the first time. A perfect identity was established between myself and my theme. I would see Krishna passing before my mind's eye in all his *lila* from boyhood up and my brush

would move of itself and the pictures in all the details of line and colour produced themselves on the paper." At another time when he was trying to recall his dead mother's face—a mother who had inspired a rare devotion in the son—he had a similar experience. "The vision was at first hazy and I saw the face like one sees the setting sun through a mass of cloud, and then the face gradually took shape until it shone clear and perfect in every detail. Then the picture gradually vanished leaving the likeness stamped in my mind. I transferred it to paper and it was the best study of a face I have ever done." Such experiences are rare even to the chosen few.

The Master is past seventy now and is still active—in a newer field. The creative urge is there or life would cease to be. True, he has retired—but it is only to the inner chamber of his own creation. The outer chamber is deserted now—critics have ceased their talk, guests have departed, the feast is over and the lights are extinguished. The Master is playing with the goddess of Art in the inner chamber where none has access. The prizes are toys, may be, yet they are too precious to be sent on to the outer chamber for critics to appraise or guests to wonder at. "The time has come when I must be getting ready to go back to the Mother's lap—and so I am learning to play the child once more." Or, as Nandalal would have it, "he is now engaged in looking through the telescope with the lenses reversed." Whatever it is, may the vision never grow dim and the play never cease !*

* For the materials for this article I am indebted to Sm. Rance Chanda. Herself an artist, she has recorded the Master's talks and the facts and incidents of his life as related by him with rare understanding and devoted care. Some of these have been published in an issue of *Prabasi* and some in her recently published book *Gharoa*. K. G.

EARLY REMINISCENCES

By JAMINIPRAKASH GANGULI

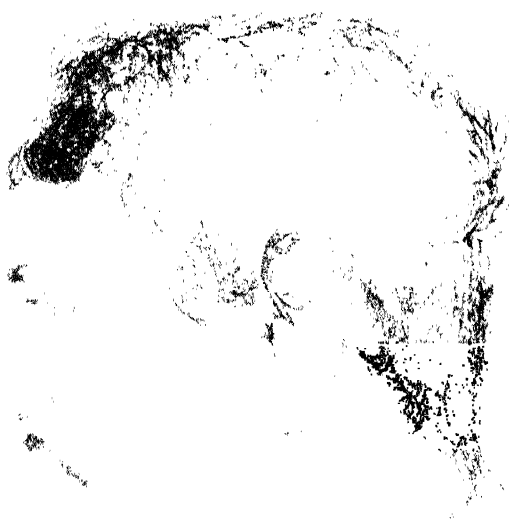
Dr. ABANINDRANATH TAGORE is my uncle ; my father was his cousin on the maternal side. Both of us were born and brought up in the Jorasanko house of Girindranath, the second brother of Maharshi Debendranath Tagore.

Abanindranath is older than I am by only four or five years, and yet, I do not know why, in our boyhood he looked so much senior to me. He had quite a tall and robust figure for his age. That may be why I took him to be as my very much elder and senior. I was extremely fond of his company. When he drew pictures I wondered at his skill. I sat by him quietly and with rapt attention tried to learn his art. As a matter of fact, my earliest lessons in painting were from him.

When I think of our early boyhood days, pictures without number vividly appear before my mind's eye. Strange, that even in my sixty-sixth year I am able to recollect so many events in their minutest detail, and how sweet are those recollections ! People say that events of one's early days slip away from memory but that has not been true in my case.

Let me recount one such incident. My Dādāmashāi* Gunendranath Tagore (father of Abanindranath) had a garden-house at Chāmpdāni. Once he took the whole family there. I was then only five years old, yet I clearly remember those happy days. There was a long marble verandah to the south of the house. On the spacious terrace adjoining it was a cut-glass fountain of about four feet high. Doves and wagtails would play round it from morning till evening. One morning Uncle Aban sat on a carpet in one corner and painted the fountain. I

* In Bengal the term *dādāmashai* (grandfather) is loosely applied to all near male relations of the same generation as the grandfather. Here it is applied to the brother of the author's grandmother.



Abanindranath in 1897

After a pencil drawing by Jyotirindranath Tagore

sat by him and quietly watched him work. At the other end of the verandah, Dadamashai was taking tea in an easy-chair, while my grandmother, his elder sister, sat beside him chatting. His pet dog Kamini crouched at his feet gazing expectantly for crumbs from the tea tray. "Look, Gunoo, what a perfect picture it is !" remarked my grandmother. "At one end of the verandah, your Kamini is seated beside you, and at the other end Jamini is beside Aban, both agape in wonder." "Did you hear what Auntie said !" remarked Uncle Aban to me. "She takes you to be my pet." "Never mind," I replied, "please go on with your painting. It is coming off splendid." I was too young then to understand the joke.

A little while and the sun's rays touched the fountain spray causing thereby a thin rainbow effect. I eagerly waited to see how Uncle Aban would reproduce that. To my surprise he painted the water in no time. It was a combination of vivid red, blue, yellow, green and violet.

"Well, what have you done ?" I exclaimed. "You have turned water into so many colours. Shouldn't it be white ?" He rebuked me : "Don't be silly and teach me lessons in art. When you attain my age the colours in water will reveal themselves to your eyes." And then he whispered and said, "Beauty demands emphasis." Of course my doubts were dispelled, for Uncle Aban's words were gospel to me.

A few days had passed when Dadamashai died all of a sudden in that garden-house. Thus ended our last visit to the garden-house at Champdani. All of us had to return home. Even to this day I vividly remember that sad day.

Some two or three years later our whole family was out for a river trip beyond Katwa and Navadwip on three large house-boats painted green. The Ganges was not crowded with steam-launches in those days : large country boats and 'pānsis' or light fishing boats were only to be seen. Soon after passing Hoogly, the Ganges became desolate. Uncle Aban sat on the roof of the boat almost every morning and evening and

painted pictures of the sunrise and sunset. I would sit close by him like his pet animal and watch attentively. One day he was painting the sunset ; suddenly, I don't remember why, he left all his materials there and went downstairs. I waited long but he did not return. Wonderful was the fiery glow of the setting sun and its exquisitely delicate reflection glittered in the river. But the lovely tints were fading fast, and I felt tempted to add some touches to the unfinished picture of my uncle's. After a slight hesitation I did so, fearing all the while that a good thrashing awaited me.

Uncle Aban returned the very next moment. I felt extremely nervous. While resuming his seat he exclaimed, "Is all this your doing ?" A thrill of fear passed through me. I meekly admitted the fact and added, "As you took a long time to return, I thought that you might not come back at all. Even at the risk of your displeasure I worked on the picture lest all those lovely colours be wasted. It was indeed beyond me to check myself." To my amazement Uncle Aban did not take me to task at all. On the contrary he expressed appreciation of my childish effort and encouraged me in affectionate words. The rest of the party were strolling on the dry sandy river-bed. The evening was drawing nigh. We two came down to join them. Uncle Aban showed the picture round to all with enthusiasm and advised me to take to painting.

Next day our boat was moored at Navadwip. Most of the party went ashore to see the market-place. Somehow I was left behind and was sad. About an hour later when they returned, Uncle Aban gave me a set of copy-book, pencil, rubber and a tiny colour-box made of thin match-wood. He had bought them for me at the local market. My joy knew no bounds and then and there I set to work with them. The colours, I found, were bone-dry and the brushes as stiff as though made of horse-hair. May be, these colours and brushes had remained carefully preserved in the village market since the days of Lord Clive for my uncle Aban to rescue them

for me. However, that was my earliest active preparation for painting. My first equipment was received from the hands of Abanindranath at Navadwip.

Two or three years passed. One day I found Uncle Aban making portrait studies of Ishwar-babu, Baikuntha-babu and the old bearer Bisweswar. How life-like they were! With so few lines! I could not but admire his magic skill. At his suggestion I also began to try my hand at portraiture but surely not with equal success.

About that time one Akbar Kabuliwalla used to frequent our house with grapes and nuts. One day he gave a performance of his native dance and music before the boys of the family. Uncle Aban was with us as audience. The very next day there was a picture of that dance. The movements reproduced in a few lines were surprisingly effective. The Kabuli song also he had noted below the picture. The words I still remember :

Jlomiosi pamanglo
Chandan lokhe lakhairo.

I did not know what it meant, but was told it was some love song.

"How faithfully you have reproduced the dance!" I remarked. "But where is Akbar's heavy stick?" "Quite right," said he, "it is for you to put in." I tried and did put it in the hand of the figure. "Doesn't it look odd and disturb the ecstasy of the dance? Do you now see why I had left it out?" I admitted that he was right. My simple addition had disturbed the intensity and robbed the whole effect of the picture. The truth of his observation went deep into me and still remains stamped in my mind.

A year later my parents with our family left Jorasanko and shifted to our present house in Lower Circular Road. I was then about thirteen years old. It depressed me immensely to think that henceforward I would miss Uncle Aban's company and guidance. Happily it proved to be otherwise. Uncle Aban and his family used to come to our house both morning and evening.

Whatever I drew I showed to him. He would suggest necessary corrections and used to guide me carefully as before.

It was about this time that Uncle Aban came into contact with an Italian artist Sg. O. Ghilardi, then vice-principal of the Government Art School, Calcutta. He had heard that the artist was skilled in pastel painting. He used to visit Ghilardi's residence for regular lessons. He had also urged me to accompany him but unfortunately I missed the chance. My parents thought that this distraction would hamper my school career.

Uncle would often show me beautiful pictures that he had been painting at Ghilardi's studio. One day he showed me the picture of a dog which, young as I was, appeared to me to be a marvel. How true to life that study of the animal seemed ! A month or so had passed when Uncle Aban, all of a sudden, stopped going to Ghilardi. The reason was known to him alone. To me it then appeared as a whimsical neglect of a rare opportunity. What a strange coincidence it was, that both Uncle Aban and myself succeeded Ghilardi successively in his post at the Government School of Art after his retirement and we both left it before time, for special reasons of our own !

About a couple of years later we discovered that a foreign artist Mr. Charles Palmer, once a professor at the South Kensington Art School, was residing in the vicinity of our house. Promptly we both started taking lessons from him. After about a year-and-half's attendance Uncle Aban gave that up too, probably owing to his inherent distaste for the rigid technique of European painting. I alone was left with Mr. Palmer and stuck to him for many years.

One day Uncle Aban brought to Mr. Palmer several miniature paintings of *Krishnalila* (life of Lord Krishna) done in colourful Indian style. Mr. Palmer praised them heartily and said, "Mr. Tagore, I should strongly advise you to proceed in this line and produce more pictures of similar nature. These pictures have a character of their own. You require no studies from life any more. I shall be greatly pleased to see your work

from time to time.” Thus ended Uncle Aban’s lessons at Palmer’s.

“I had noticed all along that your uncle could not pull on with ‘life study’ and the European principle of light and shade,” once remarked Mr. Palmer to me. “It is a good sign that artist’s temperament revolts against all rigid rules and beaten tracts. Independence leads to personality in art.” His words today have come literally to be true indeed. He who has once been fully acquainted with the intricacies of Dr. Abanindranath’s work would have no difficulty in sorting them out from among a medley of ‘modern oriental paintings’. They stand by themselves in their distinct luminosity. This is called personality in art at its height.

When Uncle Aban had started the movement of revival in Indian art many were the voices raised in adverse criticism. I confess I too was one among them . Yet I did not fail to notice the growing uniqueness of his work. People call it ‘Indian Art’ but I disagree there. It should be styled as ‘Abanindra Art’ since it is absolutely his own creation, out of the fragrance of all art in Asia.*

ABANINDRANATH AND KALA-BHAVANA

By NANDALAL BOSE

To call myself a disciple of Abanindranath is but stating a fact. But it leaves very much unsaid. Whatever I am, I know I am only a creation of his. He has created me in the world of Art and in that sense I am like a son unto him. And as such I have been the inheritor of a treasure of such value as cannot be measured by any material standard. It is a long time since Gurudeva asked for my services from Abanindranath for the Kala-Bhavana which was then in the making. Gurudeva is not with us in the flesh today. But his spirit lives as of old and his inspiration shines as brightly as ever in our hearts strengthening our resolve to carry on his work with renewed vigour.

In offering my tribute to Abanindranath today, I trust I shall not be misunderstood if I lay stress upon one particular aspect of the ideal that he has set before us—the aspect that deals with the relationship between master and disciple. We in Kala-Bhavana never lose sight of this aspect in relation to our method of teaching. We recognise that the master attracts not so much through his skill in teaching as through his ideal. As for the pupils, we believe that taking lessons in technique at stated hours, however good it may be, does not help them much in their art study if they have not already developed a reverential faith in the master's ideal. When heart meets heart and mind speaks to mind, then begins the real work between the teacher and the taught.

And a real guru never imposes himself on his disciple. He always encourages the pupil to develop his power in his own way. The guru's way need not necessarily be the pupil's way, either in the pursuit of the ideal or in the matter of technique. And this is always recognised by the true teacher. One may be attracted to the guru through his ideal or through his

inspiration, but not at the sacrifice of one's individuality. The pupil is inspired by the teacher in the same way as one lamp gets lit from another. But *sraddha* must be there—a reverential faith in the teacher, otherwise all learning would come to nought. Egotism would prevail if the pupil loses faith and that in its turn would lead to fault-finding. Intelligence must be there too, otherwise discrimination would have no meaning. But discrimination and carping criticism are not the same thing. Inspiration comes through a close contact with the genius of the master as well as through his creative work. But the pupil must take care not to imitate the guru but to choose his own path in the light of the guru's teaching. If this relationship between the master and the pupil is recognised, then the conflict between schools and schools, between methods and methods would cease to vitiate the life of the artists. Differences there must be between individual and individual and between school and school, but they need not degenerate into quarrels. A spirit of mutual respect is always helpful and one who has respect for his own ideal cannot but have the same for the ideals of others. This would also save the artists from the pitfalls of fanaticism and a falsely superior attitude towards others. A real artist is really above these little things.

There may be some among us who are getting impatient with the old ways. Abanindranath may be old-fashioned for them, but it is no good crying for new ways unless one has fixed upon an ideal, a goal which the ways will lead up to. Once the ideal is fixed, inspiration will suggest ways. It is better to avoid ways one does not know of or which are alien to one's own culture and tradition.

We have learnt all this from our great Master Abanindranath, partly through a day-to-day study of his own life and partly through his own inspiration. In the Kala-Bhavana we are all—teachers and students alike—trying our best to live up to his ideal. Apart from its psychology, the practical method of teaching followed in Kala-Bhavana is also intended to help us to come

closer to that ideal. I may be allowed to deal with this in some detail.

The method followed in Kala-Bhavana in imparting instruction to its art students has got certain characteristics which are not to be found in the orthodox method generally prevalent in other Art Schools. Indeed, on some points the difference would appear to be fundamental. The Kala-Bhavana method has never had to pass through an experimental stage. The institution has bodily adopted the method so successfully tried by Acharya Abanindranath on his pupils—almost all of whom have become eminent in their respective spheres—and so far the Kala-Bhavana has not had any occasion to regret its choice.

The difference in fundamentals is apparent even at the initial stage. Here in Kala-Bhavana, the students are encouraged to try their hands at original work right away from the very beginning ; and gradually, according to individual needs, they are taken through all the different branches of technique till they finish their course, the whole process taking full five years.

Technique, for our purpose, is divided into six main categories. All these are of equal value, and as hinted above, individual need determines the particular branch to be taken up first and so on.

The six main branches may be enumerated thus : (not necessarily in order of succession).

1. The correct reproduction of a picture or an object as seen by the eye.

2. The study of an object from all possible viewpoints and in such a manner that it can be reproduced from memory when such object is not within sight.

It must be mentioned here that a one-without-a-second viewpoint in the study of an object has no place in our system.

These studies are intended to drive the object deep into the sub-conscious from where they are expected to emerge with





Abanindranath

the basic rhythm and correct proportions of the object standing clear on the conscious mind of the learner.

3. The above studies are followed up, in natural sequence, by an attempt at concretising the abstract form behind the object.

4. The study of light and shade and of perspective in order to represent a solid mass in its proper dimensions.

5. The study of the anatomy of human body.

6. The study of colour : its right use and the harmonious blending of its various tones and depths in order to create the desired effect.

This last is a special study by itself. The student is encouraged to make a close study of nature and of good pictures so that he may develop within himself a deep sense of colour harmony.

The above as a course of study in the principles and practice of technique, it will be observed, closely resembles the formulae as laid down in our ancient art treatise : They are : (1) Discrimination (as between forms, etc.) ; (2) Comparison (in similarity or otherwise) ; (3) Proportion ; (4) Expression of emotions ; (5) Grace and beauty (in treatment) ; and (6) Finishing (which in its comprehensiveness includes colour composition, harmony in form and in expression, etc. etc.). As has been pointed out before, they are not taken in their numerical order in the Kala-Bhavana. Nor, so far as is known, was it the case with the ancients.

Our own experience has been that a careful discrimination has got to be made between students and students according to their respective needs and capacities in the matter of timing the study of the different branches of technique. The natural tendency and the individual bent as revealed in their original work must suggest the order. Technique is not recognised as a study by itself nor are lessons as such given in it. The aim always kept in view is that technique must help forward the original work of

the student. And as individual needs differ, the order of study differs accordingly.

This is a fundamental departure from the orthodox school. As mentioned before, the orthodox idea of "viewpoint" is not recognised in our system. In nature study or even when reproducing objects, our students are encouraged to get into the heart of things with the help of all the six different branches of technique and to develop a sense of identity with the objects as far as possible. Mere copying is discouraged.

In our view, a real work of art must show the artist's individuality, must be natural and must conform to tradition as well. The artist cannot afford to ignore any of these essentials nor can he concentrate on one at the expense of the other two. They must be well balanced. Too much emphasis on individuality may lead to eccentricity ; on naturalness, to mere imitation ; on tradition, to inelasticity. The students here are taught to avoid these pitfalls.

What is understood by "composition" in the academic sense has no place in the system followed in Kala-Bhavana. We prefer the term "creation" instead. By composition is meant the bringing together of certain unrelated parts and then shape them into a rhythmic whole, the life movement coming last. It is like creating the body first and then put the breath of life into it afterwards. To the Indian artist the life movement suggests itself along with the Idea. Then comes rhythm closely followed by form. In other words the life-urge creates the form best suited for the expression of the Idea.

To our mind, Art is a complete whole and it is to be judged as such. A mere analysis of its component parts is of no help. Art is a live something and it is so intermingled with the artist's personality that it is well-nigh impossible to separate the two. To understand the artist, one has to study the entire background of his life, his day to day inspirations and his way of opening himself to them, his individuality and the measure of its power. All these the guru must do in respect to his pupil-artists

and that with a deep and subtle sympathy in order to be able to guide them and help them to realise their own power. This is our way in the Kala-Bhavana.'

Gurudeva had recognised that an artistic atmosphere was essential in creating artists. And it was in order to start such an atmosphere that he summoned us to the Santiniketan Asram. Here in Kala-Bhavana it is recognised that to keep up such an atmosphere, the teachers must continue producing original works of art which will inspire the pupils to similar efforts too. This is considered to be an essential part of teaching and, without it, teaching would be a mechanical process devoid of inspiration and utterly useless. Those who will come after us must of necessity conform to this view. They must keep a watchful eye on the atmosphere built up with so much thought and care and see that it does not deteriorate and all our sacrifices go in vain. It is not so much by their skill in teaching that they will be judged but by the spirit with which they are actuated as artists and by their devotion to the sacred cause. That is the only way to keep up the ideals of Kala-Bhavana, of Abanindranath and of Gurudeva.*

* Translated from Bengali by Sj. Kanti Ghosh.

ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

A Survey of the Master's Life and Work

By MUKUL DEY

DR. ABANINDRANATH TAGORE, C. I. E., the famous artist of modern India, was born in Calcutta on August 7, 1871, at the Jorasanko residence of the Tagore family, 5, Dwarkanath Tagore Lane. The day happened to be Janmastami, the birthday of Sri Krishna. He is the youngest son of the late Gunendranath Tagore and grandson of Girindranath Tagore, the second son of Prince Dwarkanath Tagore. His eldest brother Gaganendranath was also an artist of repute, and the next brother is Samarendranath Tagore who is of a studious and retiring disposition.

The history of this branch of the Tagore family shows a hereditary inclination towards art, so that the present members of this family had the advantage of living in an atmosphere of culture. Girindranath, Abanindranath's grandfather, was himself a painter of considerable merit and used to paint portraits and landscapes after the European style. He made copies of the oil paintings in the Belgachia Garden House gallery. He had for his collaborator, Dr. Gouri Sankar, the first Indian painter in oils of note. Girindranath was not only a painter but a dramatist and musician as well. He composed many songs and jatra plays. The well-known Bengali poet Iswar Chandra Gupta was his contemporary and friend.

It was a favourite pastime with Girindranath to sail out in his boat on the Ganges when the sky was overcast with clouds and a storm was threatening, to the accompaniment of music with drums. Girindranath was a great friend of Radha Prosad Roy, the eldest son of Raja Ram Mohun Roy.

In the year 1864, Gunendranath and his cousin Jyotirindranath, an elder brother of Poet Rabindranath, were the earliest

students of the Art School at Bowbazar where Gunendranath studied art for two or three years. This School was started in 1854 as a private enterprise by a number of Indian and European gentlemen who formed themselves into a society under the name of the Industrial Art Society. Their institution was known as the School of Industrial Art during the time of Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitter. This was afterwards turned into the Government School of Art, Calcutta, when Lord Northbrook was the Governor-General of India. Lord Northbrook added an Art Gallery to the school about the same time.

Amongst many others, such eminent men as Dr. Rajendra Lal Mitter, Maharajah Sir Jotindra Mohan Tagore, Mr. Justice Pratt were members of this Society. The School was first situated (1854-1855) at a house in Jorasanko (now the residence of the Mullick family) and in turn moved (1856-1858) to the premises in Colootola (now the Medical College Eye Infirmary), to Sealdah (1859-1863) and finally to Baitakhana, Bowbazar (1864-1892).

Like Girindranath, his son Gunendranath was also a man of varied talents. He took a keen interest in photography, botany, gardening, as well as in zoological and other scientific studies. He used to send flowers grown by him to different exhibitions and was the recipient of several prizes. He helped the well-known florist, S. P. Chatterji, with Rs. 500/- to start a nursery of flowers. He was a life member of the Agri-Horticultural Society established at Alipore and a member of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal. He was very fond of dramatic performances.

This will give an idea of the environment in which the two artist brothers, Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, were brought up. When Abanindranath was about five years old his father sent him to the Normal School, then situated on the site of Mr. Haren Sil's house in Chitpore Road, Jorasanko. He studied there for about two or three years. One day his English teacher pronounced "pudding" as "pādding", and when

Abanindranath pointed out the mistake, as he had puddings for dinner every night, his teacher flew into a rage, flogged him severely and tied him up with the punkha rope to the School Bench. He was left thus confined till the school was over at 4 o'clock, when he unfastened the rope and ran home. This kind of punishment annoyed his father very much and Abanindranath's connection with the Normal School was thereupon ended.

One of the hobbies of Abanindranath's father was to make architectural plans and sketches in colour. After leaving the Normal School, Abanindranath made use of his father's paint-box to paint rural scenes with cottages and palm trees. He gradually acquired considerable skill in drawing similar interesting pictures with his father's red and blue and other coloured pencils. He was then about nine years of age.

At this time there came a change in the household affairs of Gunendranath Tagore. The whole family moved to a garden house at Champdani on the river Ganges. The atmosphere here was quite different from that of Calcutta. It was an old rambling house reputed to be haunted and standing on extensive grounds which were originally inhabited by robbers and men of ill fame, and stood close to the French territory of Chandernagore. The Park attached to the house spread over nearly 100 bighas of land and was strewn with bones and skulls. This haunted house served to stimulate the boy Abanindranath's artistic faculties. In the Park there were peacocks, cranes and many other kinds of birds ; and deer and other animals freely roamed about in it. In the morning the grounds remained strewn with the feathers of various kinds of rare and beautiful ducks which had been devoured at night by jackals. The house itself was like a museum stored with artistic vases, carpets, screens and other antique furniture, of diverse colours and designs which left a deep impression on the mind of the young artist. Abanindranath used to make free use of his father's pencils and brushes as we have already seen, and here the

animals and birds served as living models, while the vases and carpets offered him many kinds of designs and colour combinations.

From this garden house Abanindranath used to see the village maidens returning from the Ganges with their pitchers full of water and all the other usual sights to be seen in typical Bengali villages. Thus at the early age of nine the love of nature was implanted in him. On seeing his sketches one of his uncles, Nilkamal Mukerji, was so pleased that he presented him with a drawing-slate of ground glass and some coloured pictures for him to copy. All this gave him encouragement and helped his talents to grow. Sometimes he embroidered a tapestry piece and at other times he would with his bare fingers shape into being figures of Kārtika, Gaṇeśa and other Pauranic gods and goddesses out of thick flour-paste. But the house and gardens which were the main source of his artistic inspiration were also the scene of his first severe bereavement. Here his beloved father died when Abanindranath was only ten years of age.

After this bereavement the Tagore family returned by boat to their Jorasanko house. The three young brothers' appointed guardians Joggesh Gangooly and Nilkamal Mukerji henceforth looked after the boys. Abanindranath's mother desired once more to give him an ordinary school education and his guardians accordingly sent him to the Sanskrit College. While studying here he composed a hymn on Saraswati, the Goddess of Learning, and secured the first prize. He also received many Sanskrit books as prizes. There was no drawing class in the school but, along with his classical studies, Abanindranath began to write Bengali verses, illustrating them with pictures of dilapidated temples, moonlight scenes, etc.

While still at the Sanskrit College (1881-1890) Abanindranath took a few lessons in Art from his class-mate, Anukul Chatterjee of Bhawanipur whom he still remembers clearly and the beautiful pencil outline drawings that he used to make.

Although he was not very strong in his English, Abanindranath somehow managed to get promoted to the first class, being exceptionally well up for his age in the Sanskrit language and literature.

In 1889 he married Srimati Suhasini Devi, the eldest daughter of the late Bhujagendra Bhusan Chatterjee, a descendant of Prasanna Coomar Tagore. At this time he left the Sanskrit College after nine years of study and studied English as a special student at St. Xavier's College, which he attended for about a year and a half. At this institution he greatly enjoyed lectures of Father Lafont on scientific subjects.

Between the years 1892 and 1894, many of his early efforts at pictorial illustration were published in the *Sādhana* magazine and in *Chitrāṅgadā*, and other works of Rabindranath. He also illustrated his own books, *Sakuntala*, *Khirer-Putul*, and made several pictures for the story of Bimbavati. It was at this time that Rabindranath used to compose songs and sing them himself to the accompaniment of Abanindranath's esraj. This period was also utilised by Abanindranath in practising music. Some beautiful stories and dramas in Bengali came out of the pen of Abanindranath at this time which were published later.

About the year 1897 when Abanindranath was about twenty-five years of age, he took private lessons from Signor Gilhardi, an Italian artist, (then Vice-Principal of the Calcutta Government School of Art) on cast drawing, foliage drawing, pastel and life study. Later he began to attend the studio of Mr. Charles L. Palmer who had arrived from England. After undergoing a severe training under Palmer for three or four years Abanindranath attained such a proficiency in portrait painting in oils that he could finish a picture within two hours. During this period he painted many subjects in oils. In 1900 Abanindranath went to Monghyr where a complete change took place in his artistic activities. He gave up painting in oil after European style and took up painting in water colour. He returned to Calcutta and took a further course of training in water colour



painting under Palmer, and then he again went to Monghyr taking the work he had done under Palmer with him.

Here sitting at Kastaharini and Bislam Ghats, he devoted himself wholeheartedly to water colour painting from life and nature. From these ghats he could watch the graceful, slow moving pageantry of village life between the homesteads and the river. These first hand glimpses of Indian life combined with the former impression on his mind of old dilapidated Moghul forts turned his mind towards India of old, and the rich realm of Indian art definitely revealed itself to him.

The turning point in his artistic career came when one day in his ancestral library at Jorasanko house he came across an old illuminated Indo-Persian manuscript. The marvellous drawings and calligraphy in the book fired his imagination and inspired him to reveal his own self in his art.

Abanindranath then began his famous series of pictures descriptive of the familiar scenes in the life of Sri Krishna, the divine cowherd, which are popularly known as the "Krishna Lila". These productions are the effects of the subtle changes in his artistic outlook gained at Monghyr. This led him to give up his once cherished hope of becoming the Titian of Bengal. This happened nearly forty years ago and Abanindranath, then a young man of thirty, found his own expression for his art. Once for all he abandoned the European style.

Ten years later he met E. B. Havell, then Principal of the Government School of Art, Calcutta. In him the youthful enthusiast found a congenial friend and sympathiser. Both worked conjointly at the Institution. Since that time the Bengal School of Painting has always sought for the revival of the Indian traditional art and *motifs*.

The life story of Abanindranath will remain incomplete if the contribution of Gaganendranath, his elder brother, to the success that has crowned Abanindranath's efforts remains unmentioned. In the pursuit of his creative work and in the building up of the "Indian Society of Oriental Art" in Calcutta,

Gaganendranath rendered invaluable help. His other brother, Samarendranath, was also, in an indirect way, responsible for the success of Abanindranath's mission, for, by taking upon himself the onerous duties of administering the ancestral property he relieved his brothers of much worry and trouble and earned for them the necessary leisure to pursue the ideal they had set before themselves.

The orientation in the artistic outlook of Abanindranath created a new awakening in India and brought about a revival of the Indian Art which for centuries lay decadent and hidden from the public view. Just as in the period of Renaissance the savants of Europe, after ages of gloom and desolation, discovered the ancient culture, so it was Abanindranath who found out India's lost art treasures. This awakening from darkness and the new understanding which followed, impressed its mark on almost all branches of artistic activity, in painting, sculpture, architecture, book illustration, design, commercial art, lithography, engraving, etc.

It would be an impossible task to give a detailed catalogue of the paintings of Abanindranath, a large number of which may be favourably compared with the productions of the most famous masters of Europe. His "Avisārikā" (1892), "Passing of Shah Jahan" (1900), "Buddha and Sujata" (1901), "Krishna Lila" series (1901 to 1903), "Banished Yaksha" (1904), "Summer" from *Ritu Sanghār* of Kalidasa (1905), "Moonlight Music Party" (1906), "The Feast of Lamps" (1907), "Kacha and Devajāni" (1908), "Shah Jahan Dreaming of Taj" (1909), Illustrations of "Omar Khayyam" (1909), "The Call of the Flute" (1910), "Asoka's Queen" (1910 : painted for her Majesty Queen Mary), "Veena Player" (1911), "Aurangzeb examining the head of Dārā" (1911), "Temple Dancer" (1912), "Pushpa-Radha" (1912), "Sri Radha by the River Jamuna" (1913), "Radhika gazing at the portrait of Sri Krishna" (1913), "Moon-rise at Mussouri Hills" (1916), "Poet's Baul-dance in Fālguni" (1916), "Chaitanya with his followers on the sea beach of Puri"

(1925), “Bābā Ganesh” (1937), “End of Dalliance” (1939), are only a few which may be mentioned among the many that have extorted unstinted admiration in India and Europe.

The famous picture “Ālamgir” is a sublime masterpiece. The Moghul Emperor is standing bent with age, his hands at the back clasping a book inside which the blade of the sword is seen as a bookmark. The fingers of the aged monarch are like the iron claws of an eagle which catch its prey without mercy. There are many other pictures such as the “Birds and Animals” series (1915), “The Last Journey” (1914), which have also been very much admired. The “Passing of Shah Jahan” is an oil painting in wood and looks like a superb Dutch miniature. One of the latest works from his brush is a series of illustrations of the Tales of Arabian Nights (1928) where the age-old desert tales spread themselves before the eye with all their romance and mystery unimpaired.

It may sound strange to many, but it is a fact nevertheless, that Abanindranath had a wide recognition in Europe as an artist of great merit long before Rabindranath Tagore was known there. It was the friends of Abanindranath and Gaganendranath, like E. B. Havell, Thomas Sturge-Moore, Sir William Rothenstein, H. Ponten-Moller, Norman Blunt, Sir John G. Woodroffe who encouraged the Poet to publish his *Gitanjali* in English through the India Society, London, which brought him international fame.

Painting and Sculpture are but two of the many attainments of this versatile genius, Abanindranath Tagore. His manifold and valuable contributions to literature in some of its important branches would rank him as one of the greatest litterateurs of the time. Children’s literature specially has received his devoted and affectionate attention. The more important of his works on juvenile literature are “Rāj-Kāhini”, “Sakuntala”, “Kshirer-Putul”, “Bhutapatri”, “Nālaka”, “Nahush” “Buro-Ānglā” which please the old and the young alike.

The literature on art has been considerably enriched by

his works "Bhārat Silpa", "Six Limbs of Painting" and "Artistic Anatomy", and his various contributions to the Journal of Indian Society of Oriental Art. Apart from all these books, many original contributions from his pen have appeared in the pages of periodicals both here and elsewhere which have now passed out of memory.

Abanindranath's love for children has led him to devote his limitless energy to the compilation of the Ramayana and Mahabharata, the sacred epics of Hindusthan, for the benefit of his young friends. When the books will come out, they will undoubtedly be hailed as monumental works in literature. Poems that have come out of the gifted pen of Abanindranath are not many. But their deep meaning, simple ease and spontaneous flow give them a distinctiveness and charm which are rarely met with in present day literature.

The University of Calcutta expressed its appreciation of his talents by appointing him a few years ago as the Bageswari Professor of Oriental Art. The series of lectures he then delivered will for all time to come be regarded as authoritative and inspiring utterances on Art. These lectures have recently been published in a book form to the delight of all lovers of art.

Abanindranath's artistic mind expresses itself not only in the field of painting but also in divers other ways. He is interested in music and can play beautifully on instruments like sitar, veena, esraj and reed pipes. He takes more than an amateurish interest in gardening. He did some bas-relief work on common marble used for the purpose of preparing hand-made bread and numerous portraits in pastel and oil, and has also done some fresco painting on walls.

The drama and stage decorations are also among the various subjects of Abanindranath's interest. He is himself an actor of no mean merit. The success of many of Rabindranath's famous plays was due in no small measure to the artistic setting designed by Abanindranath's imaginative mind. He has a

great fund of humour and his rendering of comic parts in the plays of Rabindranath staged in Calcutta will long be remembered by those who have seen him acting.

Special mention may be made of his post-card paintings and sketches which he is in the habit of sending to his pupils as a sort of encouragement to them in their pursuit of art. A small thing in itself, this however reveals an important trait in his character. They should be collected and published in a book form.

Of warm and affectionate disposition, Abanindranath has always looked after the welfare of his pupils, and besides ungrudgingly giving his help and encouragement in their work he was always ready to help them out of their difficulties with financial aid. Indeed his timely and secret financial assistance has enabled many of his students, whose careers would otherwise have come to an end, to attain success for themselves. It is a rare fortune to be one of his pupils.

Abanindranath is still with us. His powerful mind is still creative. His work has been of great value in the regeneration of national culture in India. But our countrymen never rendered proper homage to him. Bengal has been slow to understand his gifts to her and even when she has come to appreciate them she has been slow to give recognition to the sublime attainments of the great master. It is not often in the history of a nation that a genius like Abanindranath is born.

A pertinent question arises in the mind of every genuine lover of art. What will happen to these pictures of unique value when their creator has passed away? Would all these be allowed to vanish with him? Conquerors like Napoleon preferred removing to their own country art treasures to carrying away precious metals from different lands. Should we on our part let our treasures perish unknown, neglected and uncared for?

ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

By BIRESWAR SEN

It is an extremely delicate and difficult task for the pupil to write about his Master. So many factors tend to bias his personal estimation that a correct valuation seems to be almost an impossibility. One never knows how much the Socrates of Plato is real Socrates and how much a creation of Plato's own brain.

In order to judge the greatness of a man in any particular field of art or culture, we must bear several things in mind : whether he is great by himself, a peer in his own right or great through other circumstantial or contributory causes ; whether he is great in his own limited personal sphere, a lone star, or great amidst a galaxy of great ones ; and finally, whether his greatness is purely parochial and transitory or universal and far-reaching in its effects. History records many instances in which greatness is thrust upon persons of mediocre merit, who come into the limelight of publicity for a fleeting span of years and then pass on to the limbo of complete oblivion. Of such were made the one-time heroes of political revolutions, of such are made the heads of offices of the present day. No official status or prestige can ever confer real greatness on a man unless he possesses some innate quality, a unique personal power of self-expression, some outstanding distinction which lifts him above his fellow-men.

Accepting for the time being this sketchy definition of greatness, we find that Abanindranath is resplendently great in all the three respects. He is great in his own right, a peer without peer in the realm of art, a shining light in the midst of a host of scintillating ones, and one whose beneficent influence will shed sweetness and light for years to come.

It is often seen that the pioneers of new art-movements are looked down upon with suspicion and distrust. The

Impressionist painters in France were ridiculed as mad dilettanti. The very newness of their self-expression shocked the placid conservatism of the public and made it put its back up. The same fate was in store for Abanindranath. His early work was not well received by the professional critics of the day who pooh-poohed his work as puerile and amateurish. Nothing daunted, Abanindranath worked his way up the ladder of success with unflinching determination in spite of the hail of protests and derision which the critics showered upon him. He had ample faith in his divine mission and subsequent events proved that he was right.

Wherein lies the secret of his success? What is the special distinguishing characteristic of his genius? Is he a mere opportunist hitching his waggon to the star of nationalism and reaching his goal of fame on the surging tide of a popular nationalist movement, a cultural demagogue who avails himself of a propitious current of events or a true genius ushering in a new era of art-consciousness and artistic achievement, a leader of men inspiring thousands to follow his joyous oriflamme?

Looking back into the pages of history we find that periods of intense artistic activity and those of intense national fervour do not always synchronise. The Napoleonic era did not produce great art or great literature. It was an era of action, not an era of creation. More often, it is during the fag end of periods of comparative peacefulness, that new art movements arise, breaking through the shackles of academic codifications and conservative placidity. This restlessness of the creative impulse is discernible throughout the tail-end of the Victorian era and finally it gave rise to many and varied *fin du siecle* movements in art and literature.

In India, the effects of the *fin du siecle* spirit were fairly apparent in politics, literature and art towards the beginning of the present century. The poetry of Rabindranath reflected the breaking of old traditions, of old forms, the politics of Surendra-

nath represented the incipient intolerance of the long accepted forms of government and the art of Abanindranath revived the long dormant creative ebullience pent up in the heart of a sensitive race.

Up till now Bengal had drunk deep of the heady wine of Western culture. Her modes of life, especially in the upper circles, her ways of thinking, her language even, had rapidly become anglicised. The inevitable reaction started in the opening years of the present century. Abanindranath was the first person to show that in art, as in literature, it is best to express the nation's mind in the typical and characteristic national way. Western art was all very good for the Westerners. It is a typical product of the culture of the West, just as the piano is the typical musical instrument to render Western music adequately. But for complete joyous and unhampered self-expression in art for the East, it was practically as unsuitable as the tuxedo is for Indian dinner-parties. Years of national effort to express the national mind in art carves out a characteristic channel which is typical of the genius of the country, just as the hill-streams trace their serpentine way in a characteristic manner on the hill-side. This path is not ready made, not preconceived, but wends this way and that in accordance with the invisible ebb and flow of the nation's spirit.

Abanindranath was the first to perceive that the salvation of the country's art lay in picking up the broken threads of tradition, in recapturing the essentially national spirit, of form as well as of sentiment. Early in his career he painted a series of "Krishna-lila" pictures, which in spite of their obvious technical immaturity, show that he had struck the right path and had rediscovered the long-lost secret of the old Indian masters.

At about this time he also came across a beautifully illustrated Mughal manuscript in his grand-father's library, which decided once and for all the trend of his future artistic genius. Just as the "Krishna-lila" pictures showed that in order to appeal to Indian heart, the subject matter should be typically Indian, in a

similar way, his Mughal pictures proved that for technical model it is far better to adopt the simple refined style of the Mughal masters than lose oneself in the complicated labyrinth of Western technique. The difficulty with technical elaboration in art is that it often makes the artist a slave to his technique rather than its master. Skill in handling, dexterity of manipulation, slick versatility are all very good, but they can never compensate for the loss of a telling directness, an eloquent simplicity of style and a spontaneous revelation of the soul of the artist.

His fondness for the Indian classics prompted Abanindranath to seek his early inspiration from such well-known Sanskrit works as Kalidasa's *Meghadūtam*, *Ritusambhāra*, *Betālapañchavimsati* as well as the two great Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. His classicism was not however the archaeological and sartorial classicism of David, Leighton or Alma Tadema, but something subtler, something still more romantic, seeking to recapture the fragrance of bygone days and their delicate spirit rather than their solid, matter-of-fact, three dimensional reality. True reality is not the reality of archaeological reconstructions but a finer reality which is beyond reason or analysis and perceivable by the heart alone.

This inner reality of true vision is apparent in every work of Abanindranath. He made the dry bones of history live in a way as they never had lived before. His renderings of Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and others are truer renderings of the character of the Grand Mughals than even the magnificent courtly portraits painted by contemporary master-painters of the Imperial Household. It is true that from the point of view of elaborate technique the Mughal paintings are unapproachable by any modern painter. But alas ! technique is not everything in art. What is lamentably wanting in the Mughal portraits and what is triumphantly apparent in Abanindranath's art is the life-force, the real emotional appeal which vitalises a mere painting on wood, canvas or paper into

something vibrating with inner life and glowing with a light that never was on sea or land.

A picture ordinarily is an inert thing. The life it breathes is the life which its creator infuses into it. This supreme radiance comes from the heart of the artist and transmutes it into a thing of beauty and joy for ever. The beauty and the spiritual glow that we see in Abanindranath's paintings are the outcome of his sensitive soul,—of the more inner and inmost realities, as Sri Aurobindo calls them. They are the products of those glittering movements in which

“All may be imagined from the flash,
The cloud-hid god-game through the lightning-gash,
Those hours of stricken sparks from which men took
Light to send out to men in song and book.”

It is impossible to touch on all the points of greatness of the Master's art in a short article like this. He is undoubtedly the greatest seer and path-finder in the art of modern India and the torch that he has lit will burn for untold ages and serve as a beacon light to humble votaries of art for countless generations to come.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ABANINDRANATH TAGORE'S SADANGA

By Andrée Karpelès

WHAT a painter thinks and what he writes has at all times been of interest not only to artist but to the public at large. We hope to find in his writings the secret of his endeavours or the reflection of his restlessness ; we wish to penetrate into his life, as Benvenuto Cellini, Vigee-Lebrun, Rosalba Carriera and Marie Baskirtseff have allowed us to do. The memoirs and letters which artists leave to posterity are rarely without interest, even if we find there mainly an echo of their material preoccupations, as in the letters of Michael Angelo and Gauguin....

These principles of Hindu paintings will undoubtedly seem to be out-of-date to "progressive" critics and very far removed from the "new tendencies"; the accompanying reflections of Abanindranath Tagore will seem to those, who see the whole universe in terms of geometrical figures, slightly too symbolical and literary. They will accuse him of speaking too much of "sentiment" at a time when "to check one's sensitiveness" is most desirable.... But fashion in painting changes so rapidly ! We see the most revolutionary of naturalists creating banalities on their canvas which are nothing but glorified fashionable paintings, and a majority of them returning to conventional formulas and subject-matters which once they treated with contempt when they were students of the Arts School.

"Fashion," says Paul Seruzier (in *A. B. C. of Painting*), "is a diminutive of style, essentially changing and unstable because it is lacking the support of a *universal language* ; that is why it has to be despised." Tagore, in these writings, speaks this "universal language" ; his words which are full of depth and idealism, are and will always remain true....

What has England produced in the realm of painting,

except for the temporary achievements of portraitists of a slightly superficial kind in the 18th century? There have been some good landscape painters and among those contemporaries who consent to study and to live on the continent, there are very good painters, but there never was a Rembrandt, never a Puvis de Chavannes.

Neither were there ever any great sculptors in England, a thing that had never occurred in any other country, not even among the people of Africa. It is one of the victories of Tagore to have destroyed this illusion of a possible artistic education in England, and to have succeeded in teaching young people how to love and to understand the arts of ancient India.

One should not forget the part that E. B. Havell played in this Indian Renaissance, of which he speaks in an interesting and elevating article (in *Le Studio*, 15th July 1908). Alluding to the Roman methods and to Julius Caesar, he says : "We have civilized India with the same methods for more than fifty years and have succeeded in convincing even cultured Hindus that they have no art of their own, although the proofs of the existence of such an art are numerous and vast.... Twenty-four years ago I was sent to India in order to instruct Indians in art ; and having instructed them as well as myself, to the best of my abilities, I returned amazed at the insularity of Anglo-Saxon mentality which has taken a century to discover that we have more to learn from India than India has to learn from Europe."....

Europe which, not very long ago, was ignorant of what was happening below the surface of the apparent passivity of India, could believe in her decadence ; India, for the majority of cultured Europeans, had a past from which scholars and artists could draw profitable inspiration for an indefinite time to come, but India had no more artists, no more poets, no more scholars...and even those who bowed down before her past did not hesitate to affirm that she had no future.

But then all of a sudden, in 1914, three events took place which proved that the genius of India was not, as that of

Greece, a burnt-out fire but, on the contrary, a fire very much alive which was still glowing under the ashes. The immortal *Gitanjali* was published in French ; the researches of Professor Jagadish Chandra Bose began to be known and, finally, the painters of Calcutta sent their work to Europe.

And the words of Max Muller seemed again to be as true as ever : "If one would ask me under what sky the human mind has most fully developed its precious gifts, has scrutinized most profoundly the greatest problems of life and has, at least for some, provided solutions which deserve to be admired even by those who have studied Plato and Kant, I would indicate India.

"And if one would ask me which literature would give us back (us Europeans who have been almost exclusively fed on Greek and Roman thought and on that of a Semitic race) the necessary equilibrium in order to make our inner life more perfect, more comprehensive, more universal, in short, more human, a life not only for this life, but for a transformed and eternal life, once again I would indicate India."*

* These are extracts from the Introduction to the French edition of *Sadanga* (*Sadanga ou les Six Canons de la Peinture hindou* : By Abanindranath Tagore. Translated by Andrée Karpelès. Editions Bossard, Paris.) They have been translated into English by Dr. A. Aronson.—*Ed.*

SADĀṄGA OR THE SIX LIMBS OF PAINTING*

By ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

ACCORDING to the Hindu Silpa Sāstra or the Code of Art the fundamental rules of painting are

रूपभेदाः प्रमाणानि भावलावण्ययोजनम् ।
सादृश्यं वर्णिकाभंग इति चित्रं षडङ्गकम् ॥

I. Rūpabheda

Rūpa is Form, visual as well as mental, and Bheda means Difference, such as the difference between forms instinct with life and beauty and the forms which have no beauty, no life. The study and practice of rūpabheda enable us to see and depict things as they are, and as they appear mentally and visually.

From our birth to the day of our death we live with rūpa (form), seeing it with our eyes, touching it with the five organs of our senses, and feeling it with our mind. Jyotiḥ Paśyati Rūpāṇi—it is the light which sees (and shows) forms, light-waves from the planets, as well as the inner light of our soul, reveal Form to us, diversely shaped, differently moulded and coloured. . . .

Endless and varied are the forms which our senses feel, perceive and observe. Rūpabheda means the analysis and synthesis of forms given to us by our five senses and our soul or mind.

When we approach rūpa merely with our senses, it is only the differences of visual things, or the outward form of things, which we catch ; it is either short or long, circular or angular, big or small, dark or fair, rigid or the reverse. So there cannot be much difference between my seeing, your seeing, or his

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seeing. I see a woman, you see her the same, and he sees her exactly as you or I do. Whether I or you draw her form on paper, or this photographer does it on his sensitive plate, the result will be only a woman in every case, even if she is depicted from three different points of view—front, back, or profile—or even if she is shown differently engaged—fetching water, doing up her hair or nursing a child. Let us assume that three women pose for us in these three attitudes, it is still only three women and nothing more ; because it cannot be said for certain that this is a mother, this is a servant, and this is the daughter unless we have written the words- ‘mother’ ‘daughter’ and ‘servant’ below our pictures. We cannot say that the woman feeding the baby is a mother, the lady doing up her hair is the daughter, and the girl fetching the water is the serving maid. For, a nurse often feeds a child, a mother sits at her toilet, and the daughter of the house will sometimes fetch water from the well. Perhaps by depicting one woman in rags, and the other in fine clothes, you will try to express that this is the serving maid and this is the mistress ; but what will you do in the case of the mother ? Simply by joining a child form with a female form you cannot establish the identity of a mother, or by painting two girls in close embrace you cannot definitely say that they are sisters and not neighbours. Besides, your woman in rags,—why should she be a servant at all ? We can easily call her the mistress of a poor household ! It is clear then that mere sense of sight will never lead you further than women differently dressed and differently occupied, old or young or middle aged, fat or thin, fair or dark ! Sight will never give you the spirit, the soul-indwelling the form, it will always parade before you a number of dressed up puppets posing and simulating a mother or a servant, a queen or a sweeper : it will never give the true mother or the true queen, but always the actress, a wooden toy, amusing, sometimes amazing, to look at. The difference that exists between outer forms gives us only the variety, and not the verity which underlies all rūpa.

Only the knowledge of appearances gained through our inner sight will enable us to see and show the real difference of forms.

' Nanu Jñānāni bhidyanti—it is Jñāna, the perceiving faculty of our mind, which gives real diversity to forms. The same womanly form to me appears as mother, to my uncle as sister, to my father as wife, to some one else as daughter, and to many others as friend or neighbour. If we copy such a form merely with the help of our eyes, it will remain only a woman and nothing more ; but to paint a mother, or a sister, our mind—the creator of true differences—must act on the form, change its appearance and impart to it the essential qualities of motherhood, sisterhood, etc.

Our mind grows in true knowledge of forms (rūpabheda) through many experiences. ' To ignore this mind, and to depend chiefly on the power of sight, is to see and depict the insignificant side of rūpa. In fact, forms in this external sense are without beauty and without ugliness. Only when our mind has come into contact with them do they appear as either beautiful or ugly to us. There is such a thing as ruci in every rūpa. Ruci literally means a 'beam of light' or 'the lustre of loveliness'. Mind, as well as everything that stands before the mind, is shining with this quality of ruci. When the ruci that is within us, and the ruci which is in the objects without us, have come to an agreement and harmony, then and only then has a thing appeared to us beautiful or pleasing ; the reversal of this order creates the sensation of ugliness or displeasure.

It is commonly said that "Two in disagreement will always appear to each other limping" : the same thing happens in the case of agreement or disagreement of rucis. As soon as a form is presented to our sight the search-light of our ruci throws its beam on the object, and the object, whatever it may be,—inanimate or animate—will throw its own ruci on our mind's reflector. It is well and good if both the rucis agree. Otherwise we turn away, searching for some other form or object.

And form or object goes its own way or remains waiting for another ruci agreeable to that of its own. This agreement or disagreement of rucis makes us see beauty or ugliness in things. Truly speaking, there is nowhere such a thing as beauty and ugliness except in our mind. Nature has only forms to show us—the form of a peacock, or the form of a crow ; it is only the ruci and its agreement or disagreement which makes us say : This is beauty, this is the beast. . . .

To light all forms with the ruci of our mind, and to receive enlightenment from the ruci emanating from the visible and the invisible, is to gain the true knowledge of rūpa. The practice of rūpabheda in art is for the enhancement of the light-giving and light-absorbing power of the mind. To see not merely with the sight or to paint not with our eyes only, but to see all objects in the light of ruci and to paint them with its enlightening touches—this is the law, and this is the lesson of rūpabheda. Mind enlightened with ruci is the best guide for discerning and depicting forms. When drawing forms it will be well to remember what Śukrācārya, our great art writer, has said about the making of images : “By no other way, not even by the way of Sight.”

II. Pramāṇāni

Pramāṇāni are the laws which enable us to prove the correctness of what we have perceived and delineated. They also give us exact proportion, measure, the distance and nearness of objects, structural anatomy, perspective, etc.

The vast blue of the ocean waves appears hopelessly immeasurable. How can we put it on a square piece of white paper measuring only a few inches or a few feet ? By merely drawing the whole sheet in transparent blue, or splashing it with inky and wavy brush strokes, we cannot say “this is ocean”, because we find that our painted sheet looks more like a square bit of blue glass, insignificant and limited, having in fact nothing

of the deep and limitless picture spread before and beyond our sight. It is at such times that our Pramātr̥ caitanya—measuring faculty and sense of proportion—proceed to give limit to the seemingly limitless waters, first by enclosing it between the sky line and the coast line, and then by determining the exact space which the water is to occupy between the air and the earth. After deciding about the spacing, etc., leaving so much for air, and so much for the earth, our pramātr̥ caitanya begins to find with unerring exactness the difference of tone between the yellow of the sandy shore and the gold of the sun-lit sky, the exact degree of transparency or roughness of each as well as the vast difference that lies between the form and colour of the sea, sky and the earth. It measures for us, not only the difference of proportion, shape or size of the forms seen by us, such as that of the clouds, the waves, or the sandy shore, but it will also give us the exact degree of mobility or immobility, quietness or restlessness, possessed and expressed by the silent sky, the sounding waves, and the rocky coast line. Our pramā will also tell us the exact quality and quantity of blue, or black, or grey, or red, or yellow, or green, etc., which we should mix for painting the clear sky, the swelling waves or the land immersed in light or darkness. It will also tell us what is far, what is near, and what is in the middle distance, how far away or how near each object is standing. Pramātr̥ caitanya is the wonderful measuring instrument of mind. It measures the limited and little as well as the limitless and vast ; it gives us correct form, correctness as to the expressions of idea and sentiment, the exact and proper colour of things. For instance, when we are listening to a child learning to sing we notice that because the child's pramātr̥ caitanya—measuring faculty as regards music—is not sharp enough, therefore at first it sings a note either too high or too low, often making serious mistakes as to the strength and quality of its own voice ; but when the lesson has continued and day by day the child's pramā about the whole tune or the particular note has become gradually sharper and sharper, one will find

that at last the child-mind, after much comparing, correcting, head-shaking and brow-knitting, has, through *pramā*, mastered the secret of singing correctly. This action of *pramā* we can notice even in lower animals. All the animals, large or small, use it for measuring distant sounds, and thus distinguish the difference between a dead leaf's rustling and a tiger's footstep and know whether an enemy is approaching or whether a small creature is flying away frightened. This measuring faculty we notice to be sharpest in all the birds and beasts of prey. The bird hopping on the grass and the cat approaching to capture it—both are using their *pramāṭṛ caitanya*. The cat's *pramā* gives it the exact distance and the exact measure of strength necessary for covering the distance between itself and the bird at one spring ; on the other side, the *pramā* which is in the bird tells it unerringly how far the cat has advanced, so the bird keeps its own distance from the cat and hops about hunting in the grass for insects ; the insect's *pramā* is also wakeful. It is measuring the bird's as well as the cat's approach on the soft grass. This *pramā* tells the insect exactly what is happening on all sides.

It was the *pramā* of the architect which gave the *Tāj* its unrivalled beauty of proportion. Alter this proportion even in the slightest degree and the beauty of the whole structure is spoilt. Shah Jehan's dream in marble is gone and lost to the world for ever, like the broken arm of Venus which none has been able to replace. In *Pañcadaśī*, chapter 4, verse 30, the action of this *pramāṭṛ caitanya* is described as follows : As soon as we are before a thing, or a thing has come before us, our mind impelled by our *pramāṭṛ caitanya* goes and throws itself on the thing, making the thing seen a thing felt by the mind. In consequence, the mind takes the qualities of form, and form takes the qualities of the mind. So we see that *pramāṭṛ caitanya* is not merely for giving the inch-and-foot measure of a thing, but also for measuring and giving you the outer and inner significance of forms seen and felt. *Pramā* may be said to stand

bridging, as it were, both the inner and outer qualities of the forms seen or things felt. Like a spider we sit surrounding ourselves with the invisible threads of this measuring faculty which are always telegraphing to our organs of senses as well as to our mind detailed and exact information as to the proportion, measure, etc., of the different objects caught in its webs.

Through constant exercise upon things seen or felt, this our corrective and measuring faculty is kept bright, clear and sharp. It is our constant companion and best guide. The work of sharpening this faculty begins in every creature from the very moment of its birth and ends on the day of its death. . . .

III. Bhāva

Bhāva is idea, sentiment, emotion, intention, nature of a thing and *vyaṅgya* means suggestion. In art we express *bhāva* by the different attitudes assumed by forms under the action of feelings.

According to the Vaiṣṇava Aesthetics, *bhāva* is a change or turn of the natural disposition of our mind as caused by *vibhāva*—our acquaintance with the inner significance or the outer appearance of things abstract or ideal. Also *bhāva* is said to be the cause of bringing on bodily change and transformation in the threefold division of our organs of senses : first, in the five organs of perception by which we see, hear, smell, taste or feel and touch, such as our ears, eyes, nose, tongue, skin ; secondly, in the five organs of action by which we move or talk or do things, such as our hands, feet, larynx, etc. ; and thirdly, in the five internal organs, such as *Manas*—mind or the organ of thought, *Buddhi*—intellect or the organ of apprehension, *Ahaṁkāra*—ego or the organ of selfishness, and *Citta*—heart or the organ of feeling and our nervous system.

Bhāva is the first stirring caused in our otherwise passionless and restful disposition. Mind, in its normal state, would remain like clear water in this earthen vessel, or as the surface of

a vast sheet of water when no breeze is blowing ; mind itself is colourless and motionless, it is the bhāva which gives it colour and movement. Let the spring but touch the fringe of the distant woods or the rainy-day approach pattering and rumbling overhead, let the sailing white vapours appear on the cloudless autumn sky or a tremor, however slight, of winter's breath pass over the earth, at once the mind is rippling with numberless emotions tinted with sadness or gladness, swelling with happiness or glistening with tears ! The birds, the butterflies, the creepers and flowers feel also the changes which are coming over the land. The birds are bursting forth into song, the butterflies are fluttering their wings, the creepers are blossoming, the flowers are opening. All nature is affected with bhāva

In the colours of the spring foliage, in the strength of the shooting vegetation, in the bending and lowering of the tree-tops on a stormy day, in the tremendous stirring of the ocean waves or in the rippling murmur of the streams, in the manner of sitting or walking, in the knitting of the eye-brows, in the drooping of the eyelid, in the trembling of the lips, in the manner of brushing away a tear drop, or drawing down the veil, bhāva appears visualized, as it were, in its various shapes and moods.

Our eyes can detect the many bhaṅgī or bhaṅga—attitudes and alterations which forms take when excited by bhāva ; but vyaṅgya (suggestion), which underlies the outer expressions of bhāva, the inner expression or the true significance of forms acted upon by feelings, the intention and nature of things seen or things felt, can only be detected by our mind. Whom are the singing birds announcing ? Whom do these winter's mists veil from our sight ? Whose car is passing above and beyond these rumbling clouds ? The mind will tell you, not the eyes. If the mind is affected with sad feelings—karuṇa bhāva—even the shining springtide appears dull and gloomy. If at such a time you paint a landscape you will make the joyousness of nature suggest the opposite of joyousness. This feat is performed by the mind giving the whole picture a suggestive quality and not

by the eyes which merely saw the joyous aspects assumed by the spring landscape. Changes of attitude, etc., which forms undergo, are only the exposed or visible side of *bhāva* ; unless we apply our mind to get at and reveal the suggestions which underlie the expressed or exposed side of *bhāva*, we shall never get a perfect picture. Representations, be they given through music or through words, are inferior representations unless they have *vyaṅgya*—a suggestiveness. Also it is said in our *Alaṃkāra Sāstras* that only such representations are excellent as have this suggestive quality in them. Be it a poem, or a picture, or music, it must carry suggestion, or else it is a worthless piece, unfit to be classed as a work of art. *Bhāva* is a double-hooded snake, our eyes only detect its supple form and shape and we can express or delineate these with different turns of lines and colours or by the different attitudes and figures, but the suggestive side or the subtle form of *bhāva*, which represents the second hood of our snake, we find to be hidden from our sight concealed by *vyaṅgya* or buried in suggestiveness.

How to apply the quality of *vyaṅgya* and make our works full of suggestions is what troubles us most. To express a thing definitely as well as to leave much of it indefinite, to define the indefinite,—this is the problem which we artists are expected to solve.

In poetry, suggestion is gained by leaving unsaid things which cannot be expressed in so many words. Take for instance the following lines : “They have not changed, this season of sweet scents, this spring cooled by the mountain breeze or this youthful form of my Beloved ; all are the same as before ; it is only my mind which has changed and everything looks different.” Here the poet intentionally leaves unsaid what he wanted to say and makes all the symbols of joyousness suggest the sadness of spirit. Think of an artist attempting to paint such a picture. He will be in a sea of troubles as to what he should select or reject. Suggesting by words is a much simpler matter than suggesting by music or suggesting by pictures. Take for instance this

Beggar's Bowl : it will be impossible to suggest anything like beggarliness simply by painting the outer form of the bowl, because we have seen many a wealthy man using such vessels. Even by showing the unclean, cracked and dented condition of the pot we cannot clearly suggest that it is a thing belonging to a beggar and not to a man of miserly habits. We may try to surmount the difficulty by bringing the beggar into our picture, but the bowl loses all importance and the picture becomes 'The Beggar' and not 'The Beggar's Bowl'. At such difficult times we have to use *vyāṅgya* in our picture by leaving the beggar altogether out of our canvas and introducing in his place some suggestion of the beggar's life such as a piece of rag or a few copper coins, or we can go so far as to put the bowl in direct contrast with the marble steps of a rich man's door. The greater the artist the finer will be his manner of endowing a thing with *vyāṅgya* or suggestive quality.

In art the action of *bhāva* is to give to *rūpa* their proper attitude, and the action of *vyāṅgya* is to reveal the mind and the meaning concealed behind the everchanging veil of *rūpa*.

IV. *Lāvaṇya Yojanam*.

Lāvaṇya Yojanam means the infusion of grace and artistic quality.

As the *pramāṇāni* imposes on forms the restrictions of measure and proportion, so *lavanya* is for controlling excessive movement, contortions, etc., of forms affected by emotions, feeling, etc., and also for regulating the actions of *bhāva* for artistic purposes.

Forms impelled by *bhāva*—feelings and passions—would naturally lose all restraint and assume attitudes devoid of beauty and orderliness. At such times *lavanya*—grace or the artistic sense—steps forward and with the magic touch of tenderness removes all enormity and excess of contortions, which would mar the dignity and beauty of feelings and forms.

Pramāṇani rules the form as a despot would rule his subject, imposing submission by force, whereas lavaṇya, like a loving mother, rules with tenderness. Lavaṇya infuses the different expressions of feelings with dignity and beauty.

According to the Vaiṣṇava Aesthetics, lavaṇya is something like the shining substance seen in pearls of exceptional quality. What is the rounded form of a pearl without the shining substance? So in a picture or in poetry and music, form and colour proportions mean nothing until grace and artistic quality have imparted to them dignity, beauty and restfulness.

As we use salt for cooking, so we should use lavaṇya judiciously in our representations of things. Too much or too little of it will spoil our whole work by making it either unpleasant or insipid. Rather no lavaṇya than a surfeit of gracefulness. Lavaṇya is itself purity and restraint. Like the line of gold on a touchstone or like the thin braid of gold on the border of a veil, lavaṇya leaves its own stamp on things it has touched or enclosed.

Lavaṇya is never obtrusive or self-advertising; she is always modest, although she is the very symbol of dignity and grace. In art she has the largest share of work to do, yet she is of all the least obtrusive.

V. Sādrśyam.

Sādrśyam means similitude, resemblance, equality of forms and ideas.

Hear the old woman singing : "The spinning-wheel is my son and the son of my son, it is my riches and its power has chained an elephant to my gate." Just as a child would see in a piece of stick a ship or a horse, so the old woman, as she sings, sees in the wheel a son, a grandson, and the vision of a white elephant at her door. What makes the woman draw this simile between living things and a spinning-wheel, so unlike the form of an elephant or her son and grandson? Here we do not find one form imitating or simulating another form, like painted

things simulating real bunches of grapes, creating illusion, but one form through intimate association exciting in us such ideas or feelings as might have been excited by other forms quite unlike itself.

Let us again take the simile of the snake and a coil of hair so often used by our poets. We only tolerate such similes in poetry because here is a case of pure similarity of forms and nothing more. But if some foolish painter were to put a coil of hair on the ground and a snake on the woman's head, the mistake would become at once apparent. The man has violated nature's law and has upset the natural order of things. Consequently he has created no true simile but an unpleasant caricature making both the snake and the coil of hair serve no purpose ; they look dead and meaningless, creating no impression on our mind. On the other hand, take the similitude of the yak's tail and the flowing hair. Both agree as to their nature and form, so the similitude is not violated even if they are made to change places. We rarely come across things similar in form and in nature. So for the purposes of similitude we have to depend more on the nature and spirit of things than merely on the outer resemblance of forms.

In the case of similitude in poetry, the poet's aim is not merely to make his own experience and perception of things clear and definite by comparisons but to make his readers' perceptions and experiences correspond with his own, so as to create similitude of thought, impressions, etc. In poetry similarity of forms does not count for so much as correspondence of feelings and ideas. For instance, when the poet is using the simile of 'moon-face', it is not the similarity of forms but the similitude of the pleasant feelings aroused by the rising moon and the bright face of the beloved which is in the poet's mind. In the same way, an artist in carving the lotus-feet of a goddess would never model the feet exactly similar to the flower, or make the lotus resemble the feet of the goddess. He would rather place the lotus near the feet, and the feet as near to the

lotus as he can, knowing full well that if his foot resembles the lotus and his lotus resembles the foot, they will mean nothing. Both will miss conveying the similarity of impression carried to his mind when looking at them. So we see that proper similitude is that of feelings and not of forms. No matter if the forms differ, the feelings excited by such forms must correspond and combine to express fully the experiences received by our mind. According to Pañcadaśī—"Mind flowing into the forms of things becomes the thing itself, as melted copper flowing into the mould assumes the shape and form of the engraved stamp."

Reverse this order and you will get the full significance of similitude. In the first case, the mind (*citta*) gets the stamp of form (*rūpa*) and becomes similar to the outward form of things, and in the second, form, in its different aspects, coming into contact with mind becomes one with our ideas and experiences. In music we reach true similitude only when we make the notes of our *vīṇā* sound in tune with the music of our mind. In painting also we get proper similitude only when we make our lines and colours respond to what our mind sees or experiences. So mere outward similitude of form, colour, etc., such as seen in photographs or such as many insects assume for concealing their identity, is rather a hindrance than a help to artistic expression.

VI. Varṇikā-Bhaṅga

Varṇikā-Bhaṅga means colouring, delineation with brush and pigment, brush strokes, etc. The knowledge of pigments and colour mixtures as well as the art of penmanship and brush strokes is the last and most difficult attainment of all.

Mahādeva says to Pārvatī : "All is fruitless, the repeating of mantras and the telling of beads, austerities and devotion, unless one has gained the knowledge of Varṇas—the true significance of the letterings and the lustre and virtue of figures." You will have your paper white or merely dab it with number-

less unmeaning strokes of colour and ink so long as you are not the master of your brush. The knowledge of rūpas, pramāṇas, bhāvas can be gained through sight or through mind, but the knowledge of varṇikā-bhaṅga cannot be got without practising with brush and colours.

Why does our hand tremble to approach the drawing paper with ink on the tip of a quill or brush? The reason is that as soon as we have stretched our piece of paper with the intention of painting or writing on it, it is no longer a piece of paper but has become to us as it were the precious mirror of our soul! "Like the seed holding in its small compass the completed tree", this square piece of paper has then become impregnated with our souls, the white surface reflects, as it were, the glorious forms, proportions, colours, etc., of our mind.

So to have reverence for the white sheet, or for our writing and painting materials, is natural and it is well that we should have it, but at the same time we must overcome the fear which is shaking our fingers. The hand holding the brush must be so steadied as to prevent the brush from advancing or turning back, unless we have willed so.

To have full control over the hand which holds the brush or pen is the greatest difficulty we have to surmount in the first step of varṇikā-bhaṅga. To handle the brush with ease and confidence—this is the chief lesson, in fact the only lesson. What wonderful quickness, sureness and delicacy of touch you must give to the fingers in order that the tip of the brush may write clearly and unerringly, and draw with unswerving lines, the perfect circle of the eye, the delicate curve of the neck, or the lines of a lip smiling or sad!

In sword-play the most difficult thing is to cut in two a bit of lace floating in the air. Sword in hand, one can easily cut through an iron bar or an elephant's head, but only a master can give that quick, sure and delicate stroke which will divide a flimsy web of silk.

To make the brush go flying and sweeping over the paper,

to make your colours crystalise into joyousness or melt into tears, such are the practices of varṇikā-bhaṅga. Brush strokes are many, like the sharps and flats of music. Try to draw the outline of a girl's face, you will see that you will have to give different degrees of strength and pressure of brush for different portions of your outline : at the line of the forehead which is hard as ivory your brush stroke will have to be sharp, stiff and strong ; at the cheek which is soft and smooth, the line has to flow and glide ; and at the chin the brush must sweep forward neither with too much strength nor with too much tenderness. From the forehead to the chin it is one line but it is not of the same strength or thickness throughout ; it is rigid and flowing, both at the same time.

Varṇikā-bhaṅga does not merely mean the different mixtures and uses of primary and secondary colours but also the knowledge of the real nature and meaning of colours, figures, letterings, etc., as well as the proper delineation and description of things seen and felt . . .

When we are drawing a landscape with ink, our mind must feel that all these lines and washes which we are producing are not really black but full of colours, blue or red, hot or blazing as fire, cool or melting like the sky, clear and shining as a lovely sapphire. The Nāṭya Śāstra of Bharata Muni is very definite as to the mixing of paints for the purposes of making-up, also as regards the properties and significance of colours ; it tells the actors and artists to proceed with the work of making-up, such as painting faces, masks, etc., only when they have gained sufficient knowledge of colours, of the laws which govern them and of their nature, properties and purposes. Which colours will give emphasis to forms and our ideas, and which of the colours will not, which scale of colours will elate and which will depress the spirit, which will speak of our sorrows and which will express our joy, which of the tones will reveal and which of them will conceal form and thought in a picture,—such are the things one has to master before he can presume to be an artist in

colours. What is it that really writes and paints ? Is it the hand holding the brush or is it the mind which guides and moves the hand ? A common saying is : "It is brush, ink and mind combined which writes for us."

In the sacred depths of quietness the mind sits drawing figures of light and forms of darkness, our fingers are feeling the vibrations of those figures, and the forms and the brush which we hold are overflowing with the seven colours of light and the many times seven colours of darkness !

Mind sees the true colour of things and it is mind which gives true colour to everything which can be seen or felt by us. Our sense of sight merely tells us whether a thing is green, blue or red. Even in this our eyes make mistakes, often showing blue to be green, red to be yellow, and so on. But our mind, which has more accurate visual powers, gives us the broad divisions of colours, their various tones and combinations, as well as their significance. Our eyes merely see colours ; but the mind the music, the perfume, of colours. Colours change with the changes of seasons, with the changing vibrations of light, with the changing moods of our mind.

Varṇikā-bhaṅga is not merely employed to give the proper colour of the sunlight on a flower but such colours as also will convey to us the perfume of the flowers and the degree of heat and light given by the sun either at dawn or at sunset or mid-day.

Suppose we are representing the Svayamvara of Damayantī. After we have expressed with our lines the forms, such as those of Damayantī with her maids, and all the guests and gods assembled for the occasion, we have to delineate with colours the perfume of flower garlands, the heat and light of the scented oil lamps. Again when you are painting the pictures of the seasons, if you throw away your brush after you have drawn only the forms and attitudes of things such as the roundness of the rain clouds, or the bending attitude of the trees and creepers, you will surely miss half of the beauty which a rainy day gives ;

without proper colouring you will never in any way make your clouds appear as rain clouds or make us hear their rumbling, the dark foliage of your trees will never give out the fragrance of many flowers bursting open, and your green painted lawn will for ever remain a splash of verdigris without giving out the earthy, moist perfume of the soil steeped in rain.

It is not our eye, but our mind, which really mixes the colours. Mind determines the exact degree of blueness or blackness which is required by the night sky. Mind measures the exact quantity and quality of its own colours which must be united with the colours in our paint box.

To catch the modulations and variations given to colours by our different mental states is to know the secret of *varṇikā-bhaṅga* or colour in art.

With ink it is possible to express the full range of colours if we only allow our mind's tone and tint to unite with the black of our ink. Ink ceases to be inky when the mind is infusing it with its own colours. Ink is ink so long as the mind is aloof from it. Let your mind but dwell upon ink and you will make it glow like a fairy lamp showing all the colours of the spectrum. Kālī, the dark goddess, appears dark so long as you are away from her blessed feet. The sea looks black only at a distance. Approach the goddess, let her dwell in your mind, go near the sea—and you will find darkness nowhere.

ON RABINDRANATH'S ART*

By ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

HIS Art was nothing "new". When everybody else said it was something novel, I still maintained my position, because I was sure of my ground. I knew that "newness" in creation meant anarchy. And his art, whatever it was else, was not anarchical. Cubism was something new. I allow that, but then cubism brought anarchy in its train. Cubism was only a fashion, as Rabikaka himself used to say, and, like all fashions, it had its day and is now no more.

His pictures were certainly not cubistic nor was there any element of novelty in it. You do not find in his pictures anything which is not already there in Nature. His colours are scattered through Nature, his designs are spread along fields and rivers. He only gathered them from all these sources. They were there already—so how can I say that he created something new?

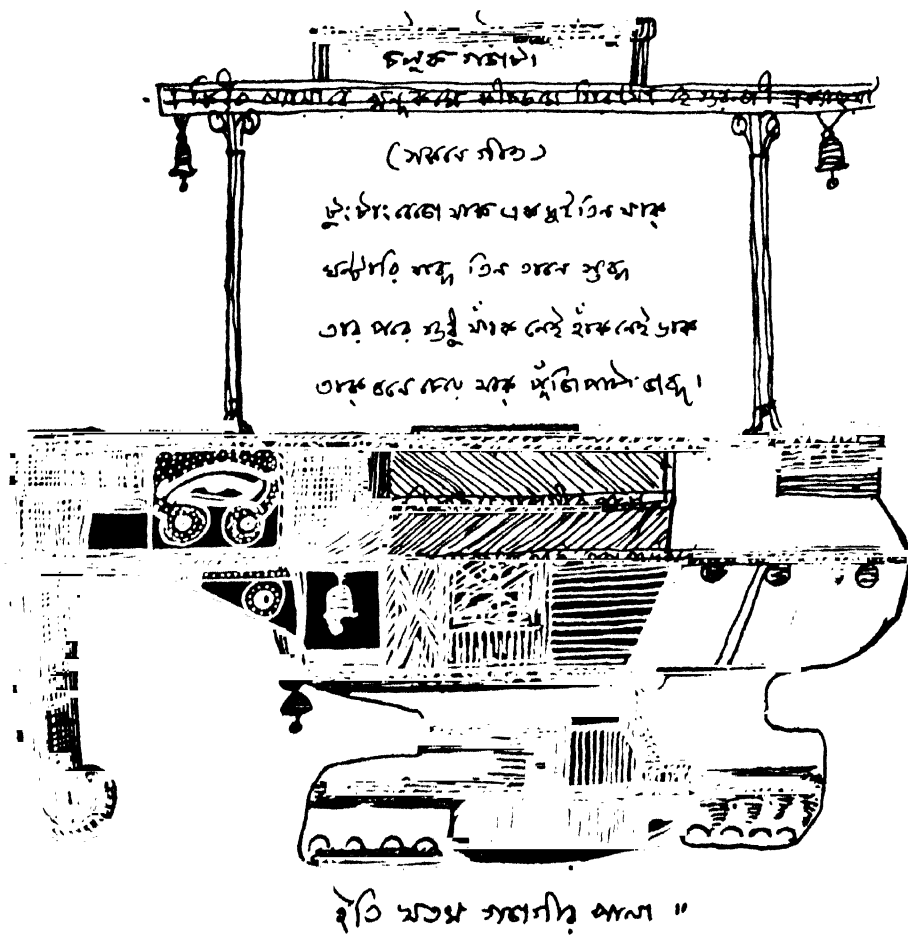
What is strange about his art is that it only found expression in his old age. So you can well imagine how much of the past was stored in him. His art had something volcanic about it. It came out like a volcanic eruption—all that had been accumulated in the past and its very impetus gave it form, its very force shaped its course. It was unique. His art was his very own. One cannot imitate it, nor can one explain it to one's satisfaction. Neither can the critic fit it into a set theory of his own or bring it under a distinct category. Pause for a moment to contemplate the immensity of his genius. Literature, poetry and music, were not enough for its full play, but it must perforce find an outlet through line and form and colour in his old age in order fully to realize itself. He was like a volcano nursing in his bosom the accumulated fire of countless ages till he could contain it no long-

* These opinions were expressed by Dr. Abanindranath Tagore in the course of a conversation with S^j. Nandalal Bose and S^j. Kshitimohan Sen. They were recorded by S^m. Ramesh Chanda and translated into English by S^j. Kanti Ghosh.

er and allowed it to burst forth flooding the surroundings with molten art-forms, at it were, and it was not till then that his urge for expression fulfilled itself. It is not for every one to comprehend the process. It is not easy to gather fire from the bosom of the volcano without an all-compelling urge and an all-consuming desire. To Rabikaka himself his pictures would appear after a time as if they had been painted in some remote forgotten age—he had so much of the past accumulated in him waiting to burst forth at an opportune moment.

There was this quality of inevitability in his art. The seed cannot rest content within its shell. It must transform itself into a tree in order to fulfil its destiny. When surroundings were favourable, the artist in him came out inevitably.

FACSIMILE OF A PAGE FROM ONE OF ABANINDRANATH'S
LITERARY MANUSCRIPTS,



THE GENIUS OF ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

By STELLA KRAMRISCH

It is difficult to find a frame for a painting by Abanindranath Tagore. Wood is too heavy, steel too hard, a coloured 'wasli' sprinkled with gold too flimsy and formal. On what wall moreover should his paintings be hung and in what kind of house? They are too independent each to be kept in a portfolio occasionally opened for seeing the co-ordinated jewelry of colour or an equal precision of structure and drawing in works of graphic art. Some are illustrations. The verses by "Omar Khayyam" are cast over by their nostalgic haze. It is in the colour, in the movements of the painted figures and in their types. Clarity of vision illuminates the stories of the "Arabian Nights". Wit makes them sparkle. Almost twenty years of Abanindranath Tagore's work lie between the two series of illustrations.

His illustrations are not only of Islamic verse and tales. Hindu and Buddhist cycles ("Radha-Krishna"—1903 ; The Six-tusked Elephant"—1912-1913) precede them and are contemporary ; other paintings illustrate his own writings, such as "Kshirer Putul" (The Cheese Doll—1900) and the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, his uncle. Many of his other paintings, too, illustrate definite episodes, from Sanskrit drama, the history of the country, and generally known Indian subjects. Most of them were painted on the verandah of his ancestral house in Calcutta. While he left it but seldom for his estate in Bengal, for Ranchi, where he painted the landscape, or for Orissa, his mind travelled far into the past of India. He worked overlooking a small green garden—seated with his back to the house full of books, ancient works of art, miniature paintings of the Moghul and Rajput schools, and bronzes from Tibet and South India ; with his back to the busy life of the house and the streets outside—;

across the green garden patch he saw India in pictures, the days of Emperor Aśoka, the years of her gods and he dwelt amidst the eclectic splendour of the Moghul episode, nearest in time to Calcutta in which he spent his days. In his panorama were included its house-tops and street noises, the poems of Rabindranath, the playing of its actors and the rural setting of his country-home in Bengal.

There life passed and the palm trees in the small garden were always green. Leisurely beholding his wide panorama, with its retrospect starting from his verandah and ending there, he brought to Calcutta India as he saw it in his vision. About the year 1900 A. D., Abanindranath Tagore became the first Indian painter to paint Indian pictures. Before him, countless Indian painters had painted pictures of gods and men, their stories and all that they meant, in symbols familiar to them and binding. In them they conveyed all they had seen and learnt, the world as they knew it, the playground of the gods, and the threshold to a state beyond gods and men, beyond names and forms. Painting was their means of communication with the gods and the states beyond them, with the world and the people where they dwelt ; they had their living by practising their art in the way they had learnt it and for which there was a regular demand. Whatever had meaning to them had its form. It was complete, a form in which art lived and which fitted it, intimately and by rules, in the same way as their lives were fitted into, and part of, the tradition which they represented. To them and their patrons the pictures which they painted could not be otherwise and none would have called them "Indian painting". What else could they be ?

Calcutta is in India but, far from being wholly of India, it is an international and commercial settlement. The people of India and Bengal who live in it had to unlearn much of their Indian and Bengali ways to keep themselves alive in it. Now they slowly try to remember.

They are helped by the paintings of Abanindranath Tagore,

the first Indian painter brought up in an international and modern town who painted in "Indian Style". He had to look back in order to remember. In pictures he brought the India of his vision before the modern minds in Calcutta and other large towns.

Abanindranath Tagore belongs to Calcutta but he is not of this commercial, swampy, rootless town. He is an aristocrat and kept away from its busy days. He faced away from them and painted his small pictures with many names, "in memoriam" to their subjects.

This is the situation. A modern town, an incoherent population, an imported, British civilisation, on Indian soil. In it Abanindranath grows up, aristocrat and painter by birth. He paints, as a child, a coconut tree, or an oil lamp, things that belong to the soil and life of Bengal. He is then nine years old and his sketches are experiments in shading and perspective : volumes and the shadows they cast, objects in concrete space, substantially realistic. That was in 1879 and would have been remarkable and unusually mature for a child of that age anywhere in Europe. It was however in India : the palm tree, the oil lamp shows it. Indian objects and the foreign method of reproducing them are of equal importance to the painting child. The foreign method is as interesting, an object in itself, as are the earthen lamps or the coconut tree and its leaves.

Abanindranath Tagore learnt painting under an English teacher and the works of his early maturity, from 1892 to the end of the last century, are on the lines of Western art, pen and ink sketches illustrating Rabindranath Tagore's poems, and also pastel portraits of Rabindranath and his brother Dwijendranath. He fitted what he was taught to his surroundings ; there the presence and work of his uncle, Rabindranath, was overwhelming. Yet when, as a young artist, he took up a subject not formulated in poetry by Rabindranath, but a traditional symbol such as the theme of Radha and Krishna, he realized its meaning and sought its form as a picture. The latter he did not know as the chain

of traditional painting had been finally broken by the impact of the modern city. No hereditary painters worked there ; it was however possible to collect paintings of a few generations ago, of the early nineteenth century where the theme had been given authentic form. Such pictures came from afar, for instance from the Kangra Valley in the Western Himalaya, last refuge and home-coming of Indian painters who had been patronised by, and had been made to cater for, the Moghul comet. These paintings were of India's past, yet doubly exotic once in Bengal, and inasmuch as the suave eclecticism of the Court painter had made sentimentally sleek the form and the meaning it held. There was also later on further confirmation available to Abanindranath, and also from outside India, the insight of E. B. Havell, who was to become the first interpreter of Indian art in the English language. The small pictures of the "Krishna Lila" series painted about 1896 are akin in intention to the reconstructions of a dreamt-of past in large decorations by Puvis de Chavannes. They measure 4"x3" and none more than 8"x6".

Size and theme are of Abanindranath Tagore's own choice. The size is that of the miniature as painted in Moghul and Rajput styles under the influence of the Moghul Court, and the appreciation of the "Muraqqa", the portfolio of judiciously selected miniatures from India and Persia. This was the last form and size in which painting appealed to its patrons, the Moghul princes, and later on to the noblemen who still clung to their habits. The wall paintings in temples and palaces could not reach, and the large painted scrolls of rural Bengal had no place, in Calcutta.

The small size of the painting—there are exceptions—remained the "frame" in which Abanindranath Tagore sheltered his fleeting and accumulating impressions. They came from a vision of India, as she had been herself in the past and in his dreams of a future.

Painting as practised in India had disappeared from the use and consciousness of the people in the large towns. By

1900 these were colonial replicas of western cities to which India contributed her hot climate and the life of some from its millions. To live nobly, and according to his genius, Abanindranath Tagore had to turn away from it. The life of Calcutta receded—and became his true “background”. Drawn into the past, he was supported by his dreams and discoveries there, and by the helpful existence of contemporary painting, wherever it came from, and increasingly more from the Far-East than from the West.

When life is sensed so acutely that it compels by its intensity towards something more real than life, to hold it, by making it, painting it, and at the same time this very life is felt doubly unreal, not true to its sources, a sham, and anyhow not the ultimately real, then the search for the sources turns into a pilgrimage into the past, while the quest is that of all art, the unknowable, the real.

Now the traditional support for such a voyage did not exist in Calcutta. Abanindranath invented and constructed setting after setting to make this “unknown” at home again in Indian art. For symbols which had become disused, he substituted settings as accurate and delicate as longing and knowledge could make them. The authority to employ them he received from himself.

Abanindranath Tagore is the first modern Indian painter. His genius relies on his personal authority. It leads him upstream, a return voyage to the sources with his back turned on the present. This is his receding background and from there he starts. The solitary journey requires effort and as the past looms large, the present sinks into it as one more of history’s modes, one more of the dim aggregates of movements and costumes aware of fleeting time. Abanindranath records and translates into painting the various periods, each conforming with time-born shapes and his nostalgic vision. The voyage into the past is not held for good at any of its stations. No decision is taken, no phase is exalted above the other in which alone perfec-

tion would seem to have been attained, so as to be re-lived again, a "renaissance". Nor did his journey owe its impulse to antiquarian interests. No old gods were to be resurrected, for they had not died. They live in India all the time even in the hearts of modern men and they are known by their names, by the songs about them and their stories.

There is a tendency, then, of symbols still current in the language to occupy also the now—by modern civilisation—emptied visual sphere.

Where antiquarian interests have no scope, for the gods still live in the language of the people and their hearts—only the visual substratum has been lost—, the seeing eye looks for it, where it can be found, and the mind turns in pity towards itself bereft of this support. There it sees no other rescue from its sentimental mood than to give form to it. The many small paintings by Abanindranath Tagore which hold and frame it in historical settings have become the amulets of the younger generations of modern Indian artists. They cling to them while their efficacy is only in Abanindranath's hands.

The technique of his paintings is one with their nature. He had to rely on his own inventiveness to find a suitable vehicle to convey his sympathies. They are with the gentle and the languid ; they are laid out in misty surfaces around an ardour protracted in long drawn-out curves, ebbing away towards the end into the dusk of recollection. He made his own the technique of English water colour painting, combined with the Japanese technique of colour washes (his acquaintance with the Japanese painter, Taikwan, falls between 1900-1905. In the seventies of the last century Ruskin had disapproved of the colour phantasies painted by the American artist Whistler. Whistler died in 1903).

This combination remained his proper medium, entirely his own. It has the effect of a veil drawn by him across the shy past so that it can settle, without being disturbed, on the edge of the future where he stands himself with his face averted from the

present, in the dusk of yesterday and the dawn of tomorrow. The delicate fabric is issued as an authentic record of his time. On his romantic journey he always comes back to this point where he lives and makes the present, as history, into the picture of an emotion.

When he does not paint, in restful hours, he investigates, as a scholar, his findings and writes on the traditional method of Indian painting as laid down in the ancient scripture of this craft ("Some Notes on Indian Artistic Anatomy" ; "Sāḍaṅga, or the Six Limbs of Painting" ; etc.). He studies, but does not practise it. It would tie him on his journeys to a rock. He is the first modern Indian painter, for he paints the paradox of the traditional civilisation of his country beheld by himself who belongs to it and yet as a painter has his stand besides it so that he can view it. In the acceptance of this position there is no room for a revival nor for escape. It puts him to a test. He stands it, cloaked in a wondrous robe, composed and worn in his family and by no one else in India, a towering figure of modern India.

In this solitary stand as a painter, he is upheld by his own, human company. When the present sinks into the past, as one more of the episodes of time, a moment to be endured, an emotion to be suffered, another emotion is provoked by it : with a whimsical gesture, self-defeated sentiment defiantly asserts his sense of life ; he lays it down in firm lines drawn across the deferred actions of the painted figures, and in clear surfaces of colour.

These powerful paintings originated in the second decade of the present century, and following upon an actual journey of his to Orissa (1911). Tangibly near the glory of medieval temples, firmness came and quiet. He had found home, and in his work himself, as he would have been, had not Calcutta interposed itself. In this vein he paints, on his return to town, the actors on the contemporary Bengali stage and those on the stage of Indian history ("Queen Empress of India", etc.).

These works are constructive and some of the subsequent pictures are also large in size ("Ālamgir—1921 ; "Tagore-Gandhi-Andrews"—1921).

From then on he reaps to this day a manifold and rich harvest. Much of it has been exhibited and reproduced. Among his innumerable followers they have spoilt and watered it with false colours and dished up a stale entertainment for literary tastes.

The art of Abanindranath Tagore rests on his own personal authority. He has not received it from any tradition. This had been broken, first by the interference of the Moghul Court where works of art had to serve as a pastime of jejune courtiers and then by the impact of modern city life where the dregs of Western "naturalism" in art were accepted because Government schools of art administered them to an uncritical public. Abanindranath dreamt and worked his way back to the art of his country. It met him in consolidated, historical forms, while the people of his country, in the villages, could still have their normal supply of the paintings which they required, the work of local craftsmen in the approved way. These did not, or by accident only, reach the modern towns ; they were left outside and those, who later on, in the wake of Abanindranath Tagore, copied and "revived" their form, combine two misunderstandings. Traditional art to them is as "folk-art", an out-of-the-way-thing which, in town, attracts attention. Besides, to those in search of "pure" and "indigenous" form, it provides examples for exercises in the critically conscious making of compositions. This is how the modern Indian artists, at a distance, keep pace with the corresponding struggles of art in the West. With the most conscientious of them, the making of the picture has ousted its meaning.

The quest of Abanindranath Tagore was the meaning of Indian art and how to make it an Indian painting. As in all genuine art, meaning and form are not sundered in his work. Meaning frequently is conspicuous, more even in the title ("The end of the journey"—1914 ; "Old, old toys"—1922 ;

“Mother India”—1905 ;) of some of his paintings than in the actual presentation of the subject. The stress laid on it by the words, and the not always wholly identical pictorial form, are the form itself of the authenticity of his quest. He set out in search of a vision which he substantiated by his knowledge of the visible records of the past, their setting and also that of the Indian scenes. This carried him across the gap between international modern civilisation, and Indian tradition. At times he lingered in the crepuscule across the gap, at times his journey was tortuous, for the knowable past and his knowledge of it shaded the goal, the unknowable. Other paintings by Abanindranath Tagore have the form of finality (“Illustrations from Omar Khayyam”—1908-1910 ; “Illustrations from the Arabian Nights”—1930 ; “The masked actor (Java)”—1924-25 ; “Broken flute”—1920-21 ; etc.).

If he did not receive the authority to paint, from a valid tradition, he also lacked, outside his family, support from his country-men. Scholars pointed out that his work was not according to the canons of traditional art as laid down in the *Silpa-Sāstras*, which he himself had studied and translated, and the Westernised critics, not always up-to-date in their own field, noticed the absence of many of the ingredients of realism.

With this double lack, the sum of his works is authentic. It is the form of a quest, across present and past, with the use of period and episode, towards the timeless. Some of its symbols he knew and also himself as an instrument. He set it himself pointing in the irresistible direction.

GURUJI

By ASIT KUMAR HALDAR

I HAVE been requested by the Editor, *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* to write on my "Guruji"—Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, which is a task I consider to be a most difficult one. I took my initiation in art when I was a boy of fifteen and my education wholly rested on his kind guidance and inspiration. I had to write on him when I was in my teens in the *Bharati* magazine and remember well that Dr. Tagore also annexed a note about his early days as a school boy with pictorial and graphical writing—the style which is considered by the Bengalee writers as one which can hardly be imitated. Apart from my study in painting, I started writing essays on art at a very immature age and it was my Guru who always encouraged me and corrected almost all of them giving fresh impetus for such writing. Moreover, I can only say that it is not possible for me to show you the depth of his work and thereby say something which would probably sound as giving testimonial to my master. I would rather like to take the opportunity to pay my homage to my Guru through this highly esteemed magazine. I am proud of having found a master (Guruji) in Dr. Abanindranath Tagore since my boyhood and shall always remain his disciple as long as I live. What he has done for the country's art is known to the world and his work will continue to inspire generations of artists of our country so long as national feeling and national institutions remain intact. I close this note with my sincere thought and prayer for his long life.

THE SEARCH FOR PERFECTION

By JAMES H. COUSINS

ONCE upon a time (it must be twenty or more years ago now) on one of my angel's visits (few and far between) to the ancestral Tagore home in Calcutta, I asked Aban Babu (now Doctor Abanindranath) how he felt when trying to attain the delicacy in his paintings which was one of the special features of his art. He registered (as they say in Hollywood) struggle and disappointment. Then he reached to a collection of odds and ends such as one expects in a painter's environment (like the half and three-quarter used tubes of colour that used to cling to various parts of our garments in the work-room of AE, painter and poet, in Dublin, when we squeezed in for an all-night discussion in the early days of the literary and dramatic movement forty years ago). He (Aban Babu) lifted a brush on high and exclaimed, "Even this sometimes feels too coarse for what I want to do." Unless my memory and my arithmetic are at fault, the brush consisted of one hair, certainly no fewer, though it may have had one more. The point was that between the desire of the creative artist and his creation there was a crevasse so broad that even a single hair could not bridge it ; with the corollary that satisfaction in achievement was fatal to good art.

Years afterwards, when invited by Paderewski the pianist to lunch with him at his home in Switzerland, as unanticipated "bakshish" for two sonnets on his playing in Lausanne Cathedral, the talk turned to the subject of perfection in art. The great musician resented efforts to attain perfection. To rob the artist of the struggle for perfection would be to rob him of the supreme stimulus of his life (or words to that effect : I cannot give the exact saying, as my record of it is in a book that a friend has borrowed, and not returned, a frequent experience

in this wonderful world where borrowing is esteemed a higher virtue than lending, and returning is not regarded as a virtue at all).

Some years either before or after that, Abanindranath and perfection turned up again. I had worn out quite a number of pairs of shoes and sandals tramping from Kashmir to Calicut and Karachi to Calcutta with exhibitions of Indian painting under my arm (they began with reproductions from the *Modern Review* in those far-away days), trying to interest Indians in Indian art. I had quarrelled with officialdom over their thesis that a painting of a Goddess without an upper garment was an "obscene picture", and that a magazine having it as its cover-design could not be allowed to go through the chaste post-office for fear it might contaminate the modest bathing-beauties that adorned magazines from London and the Continent ! I had watched with parental solicitude the emergence of young painters in the Indian manner. And I had conceived the bright idea that art was not a reservation of artists, but a necessity of all and sundry for the fulfilment of the creative impulse that is inherent in humanity, the suppression of which impulse was then threatening to revert to destruction, and is now engaged in fulfilling its threat. The educator that wrestled for supremacy with the artist in my complicated make-up (Gemini rising, Sun opposition Saturn, etc.) took the language of art to be as essential to the young as the language of words, and believed that art-activity in school was as important to the born fool as it was to the born genius. Hence I welcomed all efforts to spread the teaching and practice of painting, and made concession (though much against my judgment) to the exhibitionism in painting that was as rampant as it was in music in India, to the inordinate development of self-conceit and the sense of personal attainment of perfection before a decent mediocrity had been reached. One day I received a letter in the delicate small handwriting of Aban Babu that gave me pause. I have so carefully preserved the letter that I cannot find it

without an impossible rummage through a myriad papers. But I remember the black eye that it gave me for my encouragement of mediocrity in art, and my frustration (or some such word) of the effort that was being made by himself and others towards the attainment of perfection in Indian painting. And he went on towards his ideal, as I went on towards it in my own art as poet.

I heard a wonderful thing
As I drank of the Spirit's wine ;
And what I heard I sing :
But only the song is mine ;

Only the struggle of speech,
Like a whirl of leaves in a blast,
Or a fringe of shells on a beach
That tells of a wave that has passed.

From a rapture a moment shared
I fall on a broken wing.
But what I have heard I have heard—
And the least is the song I sing.

And I agreed with Shelley's statement that while he would be satisfied with nothing less than perfection, he would accept whatever led towards it (or words to that effect). Gokhale said that what India needed was education, even bad education, meaning that the faculty and power engendered by the educational process itself, apart from the good or bad of its ingredients, would lead to a desire for better. Not having any knowledge or desire for art at that time, he did not say that what India needed was art (all the arts), even bad art, as the exercise of the creative faculty would lead to increasingly finer results. There is much to be said for both points of view ; the point of view of the humanitarian who feels the stifled hunger for perfection that our educational systems in India do not meet, and the point of view of the genius whose hand approaches perfection to the distance of a single hair. Being myself a searcher for

perfection in verse, I have my affinity with the great painter in whose honour this supplement of the *Visva-Bharati Quarterly* is published. His work has been to me since I first knew it in 1916 a delight in its purity and exquisiteness. For this I add my word to the honour that is being offered to him, as he reaches seventy years of life a year before I reach the beginning of my own seventieth year; and I lay before him my affectionate recognition of his greatness of character and endowment on which his art is based.

ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

By RAMANANDA CHATTERJEE

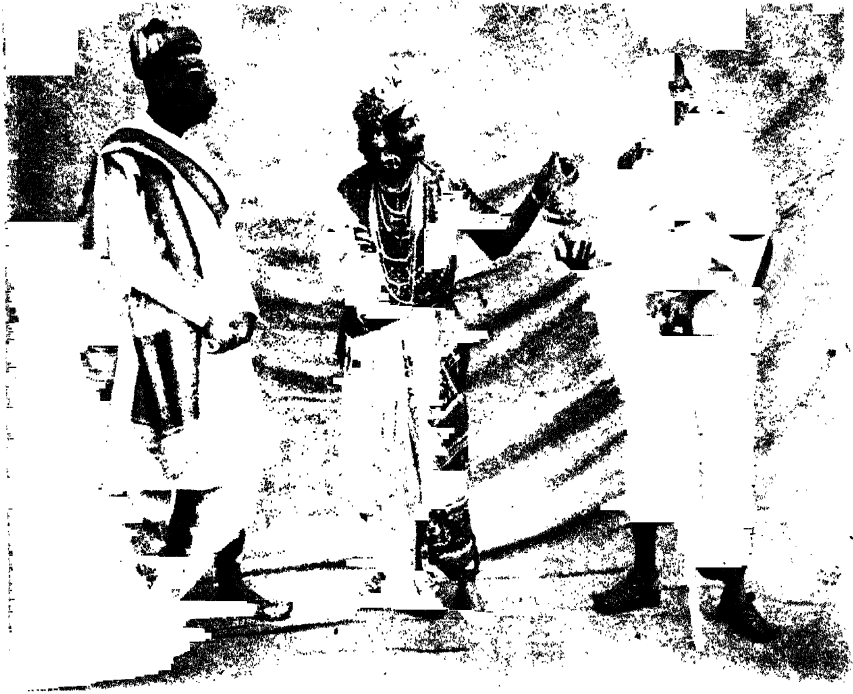
THERE are men in all countries whose eminence in some kind of creative work throws into the shade their distinction in some other kind of creative work. Abanindranath Tagore is such a person in our country. His greater achievement as a painter makes men forget that he is a literary artist of no mean order. His Bengali stories have sufficient merit to give him a permanent place among the story-writers of Bengal. Among these, his *Kshirer Putul* has been translated into French and been acclaimed in France as a fine production. His discourses on Art, delivered as Bageshwari Professor of Indian Fine Arts of the Calcutta University, are remarkable for their originality. He being pre-eminently an artist, his stories have naturally a vivid and picturesque character.

It is, however, as a painter that he has achieved the greatest distinction. The late Mr. W. W. Pearson of Santiniketan named Abanindranath as the greatest artist. For the kind of creative work he has done he owed his inspiration to Rabindranath Tagore. His genius was greatly appreciated and encouraged by Mr. E. B. Havell, then Principal of the Government School of Arts, Calcutta. The late Sister Nivedita highly appreciated his water-colours and did much to enable others to appreciate them. Of this I can speak from personal knowledge and experience. It was she who was instrumental in opening my eyes to the merits of Indian Art. Previous to my acquaintance with her, which blessing I owed to the kindness of my affectionate teacher Sir J. C. Bose, I used to reproduce in my magazines Indian paintings done according to prevailing European styles. When I took to reproducing the water-colours of Abanindranath Tagore and his disciples, the finest appreciations of them were written by Sister Nivedita.

I still remember how quickly she wrote the appreciation of his "Passing of Shah Jehan". For some reason which I cannot just now bring to mind, I was very late in sending her a proof of its reproduction. In fact I sent it to her only the day before the publication of that number of the *Modern Review* in which that picture was to find a place as the frontispiece. She was then living in a dilapidated house in Bosepara Lane, Calcutta, known to all followers of Swami Vivekananda as her residence. I sent one of my clerks to her with a letter and the proof. On reading the letter and seeing the proof she expressed great annoyance that I did not give her sufficient time—not perhaps even half an hour—to write a fitting appreciation. But that mood passed away in a moment. She took up her pen and in a few minutes wrote out perhaps the finest of all the appreciations of Abanindranath Tagore's and his disciples' works that she ever wrote. After its publication in the *Modern Review*, it was printed in Chatterjee's Picture Albums also along with the picture.

I was among the first Indian editors—perhaps I was the first Indian editor—to be ridiculed for publishing Abanindranath's and his disciples' works. Owing to his great reputation at present, his detractors are not now so vocal as when his works first began to be published. But I have my doubts whether he is even now sincerely appreciated in the country by any very large numbers of his countrymen.

Having been used to ridicule among my countrymen, I was surprised to find a foreigner in Lahore who at the very first glance picked out some of Abanindranath's pictures in the *Modern Review* as excellent specimens of pictorial art. It was in December, 1910, and it happened thus. In that year and that month I was summoned from Calcutta to appear before a magistrate in Lahore to give evidence in a case. I guessed that perhaps the *Modern Review* had something to do with the affair. And so it really turned out to be. My friend the late Major B. D. Basu, I. M. S., had contributed to the *Modern Review* a



A Scene from PHALGUNI

Samarendranath
VIZIER

Gaganendranath
KING

Abanindranath
SRUTI-BHUSAN





Abanindranath entertaining children with a story during his last visit to Santiniketan
March, 1942



In a characteristic pose

series of articles on the Sepoy Army. These were translated into Urdu without our knowledge by a Lahore journalist. For this he was prosecuted on a charge of sedition. His line of defence was that, as I who had published the original articles (which appeared anonymously) had not been prosecuted, he the Urdu editor could not be held guilty. The prosecuting counsel was one Mr. Bevan Petman. I went to the 'Magistrate's court with the *Modern Review* volumes with me. Before the case was taken up, Mr. Petman was engaged in conversation with me and was turning over the pages of the *Modern Review* volumes. Suddenly his eyes were arrested by the reproduction of Abanindranath's "Mātṛ-mūrti" or "Bhārat-Mātā". This picture is still to be found painted on the northern wall of Sir J. C. Bose's parlour in his Calcutta residence. Mr. Petman praised this picture highly, as also some pictures from the artist's illustrations to Kalidasa's "Rtusamhāra" or *The Seasons* which were in that volume of my *Review*, and asked me how I could get such excellent works of art for reproduction. "By the courtesy of the artist," I replied. I narrate this anecdote not because Mr. Petman was an artist or art critic whose opinion had any value, but because I was surprised that, when thousands of my educated countrymen could only cry down Indian Art, a foreigner who was only a practising lawyer and who, if he ever saw any works of art at all, saw only works of European art, could perceive the merits of Indian Art as soon as he saw some fine specimens of it.

I have referred to Abanindranath's disciples casually above. The use of the word disciple must not be taken to suggest that the great artist has taught his pupils to imitate him. Nothing of the kind. He has encouraged every one of them to draw and paint whatever they like and in whatever style they like. He never asked anybody to follow his style. Himself highly original, he did and does everything in his power to draw out the originality of his pupils. I have heard of this great trait in the character of this great teacher of art, and I noticed it myself when he very

kindly gave some lessons in drawing and painting to my elder daughter.

I have penned these few lines only in order to be able to share the privilege of being in the company of those who are better able to discourse on the merits of Abanindranath Tagore's art. In the present state of my health I could not think of doing so myself even according to my poor ability.

ABANINDRANATH TAGORE AT SANTINIKETAN*

By GURDIAL MALLIK

THE MASTER-ARTIST, Abanindranath Tagore, came to Santiniketan on 27th January, 1923, for a week's stay. This was his second visit. The first time he was there was twenty-two years before, during the lifetime of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore, when he had found, to use his own words, ample provision for his "external enjoyment".

On arrival in the Asrama he was accorded a cordial reception in the unique Santiniketan style with sandal-paste, flowers and songs. Welcoming him, Gurudev said that he had known the honoured guest since the latter's childhood. He himself, as every one knew, had eluded the clutches of Saraswati's messenger, or rather tax-gatherer, and, instead, inspired by the strains of her *vīna*, had chosen to weave a garland of flowers for the goddess. But, alas ! now, along with him, the plants, too, had grown old and his stock of flowers run short. The artist Abanindranath was, however, still comparatively young. He had let loose, through his art, the spring-breeze which would bring forth new flowers. With his magic wand he had raised the dead to life. He wished the guest could stay always in their midst so that he (the poet) might get from him not only a ceaseless supply of flowers, but also of the coloured thread to string them together into garlands for Saraswati.

In reply, Abanindranath referred to his first visit to Santiniketan, about 1901, and said that whereas then he had found in the Asrama food for external enjoyment, now he had been supplied with food for his hungry mind. He was grateful to his English *guru* for having set his feet early towards the

* Based on the "Shorthand" Notes about Abanindranath Tagore's visit—1923, kept in the writer's private journal. For an account of the recent visit of the artist to Santiniketan (March 1942), see the *Visva-Bharati News*, April 1942.

path of Indian art, along which he had been travelling ever since with the humility of a pilgrim. But he had realized that art could never be "taught". His advice, therefore, to those who aspired to be artists was to have faith in themselves and to express creatively the deepest intuitions of their own hearts. To this end, he suggested that they should work alone for some years, far away from all adventitious influences. For, in that way only could they ever expect to contact the Truth that dwells at the heart of things.

In this connection he alluded to one of his dreams which, some time before, he had related to Nandalal Bose. He saw (in the dream) that he and his pupils were treading the road on which he had himself started. After covering a short distance, they came to a turning. He turned in at that corner, while his pupils were left behind, and thus they were separated from each other. He then noticed a curtain hanging in front of the door whither his feet had led him. The curtain was lifted for a moment and he saw the door, but again the curtain fell. That glimpse of the Door—of Truth—had illumined his face and ever since he had been striving for the fulfilment of that vision in his life and work.

Continuing, he claimed his *guru dakshina* from his pupils. It was no costly article that he asked them to give him. What he wanted was that they should provide the children with good artistic toys, for, he believed, that was the only way in which the little ones could be imbued—of course, unconsciously—with the true spirit of art. Further, he wished that for five years his pupils should not exhibit publicly any of their pictures,—as he himself was not going to do,—so that in that self-imposed seclusion they might discover how much of the "dues of Truth" they had yet to liquidate.

On 29th January, Gurudev and Abanindranath Tagore delivered themselves informally of their respective views on art. Gurudev observed, in effect, that art belonged to the region of the intuition, the unconscious, the superfluous. It was an ever-

continued integral activity, so that it could not be “disembodied” and debated upon.

But the artists in the West asked, “What is art ?” This indicated that their art had reached a stage of “dryness”, else they would not endeavour to analyse it to the very minutiae. However, it was worthwhile their trying to understand what the term meant. Art was an expression of the infinite, he continued. Form was necessary, no doubt, but it should not be the be-all and end-all of the artist. It gave a glimpse of the Formless. Where this was not done, art was cheated of its aim. For instance, he once saw a picture of the Buddha, wherein the great teacher was depicted in an emaciated condition. Now that was a *fact* which told one that Buddha’s austerities were very severe ; but it was *not art*, because art would have suggested the joy in the heart of the Teacher at attaining salvation.

Was art an expression,—accurate or artistic,—only of pleasure or pain, of an happening, historical or otherwise ? No, it should ever express the infinite, revealed through either of these elements. A realistic portrayal of these could be called skill or decoration, but not art.

It was natural for man to feel spontaneously inclined to engage himself in creative activity. In the world of the finite, of necessity, he was a slave ; but in the world of joy, of aesthetics, of art, he was a creator, a king ; to wit, the child on the playground. Creation was not imitation ; if it were so, where would be the place of the artist’s personality in his creations ? The creative impulse or activity characterised man more than it did the bird or the beast. The bird built a nest for itself, it sang ; the peacock danced and so on, but this creativeness was in a lesser measure than that of the human being. Imitation had a place in the creativeness of the lower creatures, but it had none in man’s. Man was ever creating anew, like God who had been called in the scriptures, the Creator.

Gurudev, then, referred to Japanese art which he had seen during his last sojourn in the land of the Rising Sun. In the

pictures of the artists there, he found the sky portrayed in its positive aspect ; *i. e.*, with the suggestiveness of the infinite. He had met one of the Japanese artists who began the day's work with a worship of the image of the Buddha. That was symbolical of a great truth. For, the artist should not listen to the talk of the art-critics or theorists. He was to lend his ears only to the Divine Impulse, the intuition and the inspiration of the Author of ALL.

Materials of art were of two kinds, internal and external. To the latter class belonged the colour, the canvas, etc., while to the former belonged the deep feeling, the faith within or the vision, or the experience of the bliss, of the infinite. Accumulation of facts was not creation. A realistic picture was like a safe, containing coins upto its very roof. The artist never stopped in his creativeness, as Indra did not stop even after building his paradise. The gods were ever engaged in making it newer and newer. Through the artist, man created his paradise.

Science was trying to pry and peep through the curtain which hung over God's green-room,—the materials which contributed to the bringing forth of the wonderful creations we saw. But she will never be able to analyse or account for that perfection, the inexplicable glow, which was intertwined with the very vitals of those creations. Life was not battle, as they very often spoke of it in the West. It was "lila" (play), an expression of the truth, through beauty and joy, perceived by man, because man always desired to perpetuate his particular emotion or experience. For example, one day he found that on one of the walls of Kala-bhavan these words were written by a child : "X—is an ass". Now that sentence did not express any of the ordinary aspects of X ; on the contrary, it expressed the writer's *passion* : of his being angry with X. The child detached the idea of the boy X from the multitude of what is non-significant and tried to make him *real* to others. And that is art.

In conclusion, he said, the artist created a world of joy which was immortal. This taste and touch of immortality may

be of a momentary duration ; that did not matter. The artist's prayer was to lead him from death of facts, of forms, and of the finite to immortality of the infinite and the ineffable. His other prayer was : "We bow to Thee", for all inspiration came from God.

Abanindranath said that the artist should melt everything he saw in the flame of his own genius. He should keep himself at a distance from the subject of his art, lest his personality be submerged into his subject. His creation should convey much more than information or exactness. It should be an expression of the life-story of the object he portrayed.

Art was a play or performance of lines, the symbolism of which should be fully realized by the artist. A great artist was he who hid his technique or art in his creation. It was the lower kind of art which filled one with wonder or repelled him. For, art had a purpose ; namely, to attract the heart of the spectator. A complete mastery over technique was essential, because that alone would give the artist that ease and assurance with which the artist drew his masterly strokes.

Gurudev then analysed the why and wherefore of the spirit of detachment which ought to underline the relations of the artist with his subject. All things, he said, existed, surrounded with several non-essentials. Through the door of distance only the truth of things could pass and enter into the palace of the artist's personality. The artist crowns only the King (the essential) and not his retinue (the non-essential) ; and so he waits to welcome him. Yet, in another sense, there ought to prevail intense and affectionate sympathy between the artist and his subject.

On 1st February, Gurudev and Abanindranath Tagore visited the workshop. The great artist spoke about the spirit of joy which should inform the manifold creations of art. The artist's work should be a channel for that stream of joy which perennially flows from the artist's soul. For, only then his creation would bear on it the impress of individuality as well

as the play of rhythm. The child stumbled times out of number, but everytime he fell and rose again he covered, nay, conquered some ground of the road which led to his ideal ; namely, how to walk. The artist's joy consisted in his creative powers, and not in any adventitious circumstance. He should always draw upon his own resources and not depend for inspiration and action on public demand or appreciation. At every step the artist discovered and revealed a new mystery, a new beauty.

Incidentally Gurudev remarked that one of the greatest regrets of his life had been that he had not "educated" his hands or eyes or legs into doing things artistically. Had the whole scheme of education in the Asrama been left to him, he would have trained the boys in dancing and in other "anatomically artistic accomplishments". If our limbs did not move artistically then there would be no difference, in this respect, between the four-footed animals and men. The delicacy of his fingers, the suppleness of his body, all had remained idle. They did not realize that there was joy in doing things with one's own hands. It will not do merely to develop the head. One should do everything in an artistic manner. He referred in this connection to his Japanese maid-servant (during his last sojourn in Japan) who used to do everything *artistically*, even fold his garments, and said that he felt every time the rhythm, the music and the delicacy of it all.

On 2nd February, 1923, Abanindranath Tagore returned to Calcutta. But the sky and the *sāl* avenues of Santiniketan and the hearts of some of the older inmates of the Asrama still retain the sweet and inspiring memory of the honoured artist's visit and vision and way of life.

AN ARTIST'S HOBBY

By MOHONLAL GANGULI

To a student of human nature, the personality of Abanindranath Tagore offers an interesting, all-absorbing study. I do not intend to analyse here Abanindranath's individuality, nor show what goes to make him an artist so great, but merely to indicate one of his characteristics which is, to a great extent, responsible for a number of his excellent creations.

IN SEARCH OF STONES.

Those who have seen him in the country—taking a walk—have possibly noticed how he gets tremendously interested in objects that men in general would pay no attention to. I know of many lovers of Nature who press flowers and leaves, or pick up shells for their collection. But I do not know of anyone, except Abanindranath Tagore, who collects stones. During holidays, when he is seen with a long pointed stick, roaming thoughtfully about in fields and glades, he is actually collecting bits of stones. One often asks, why does he collect them, has he a geological interest? He does know a lot about the formation of the earth's crust and the ages of stones; but geology is not his real hobby. He likes to discover things which are hidden, unearth them and give them some meaning. He instinctively cares for things which are uncared for, studying them and finally enjoying them. Bits of stones embedded in earth offer him opportunities to satisfy this instinct. Thus, while an average man's appreciation of Nature would be limited to the blossoms and the foliage, the clouds and the sun, Abanindranath's would include a world of much less obvious beauty.

This side of his nature answers very well the question so often asked, "What magic has he got in his eyes that he sees beauty so perfectly?" The secret lies in his love of little things,

their shape, form and colour, a deep and searching interest in a world perhaps more subtle than the world of apparent beauty.

THE ARTIST'S RECENT HOBBY.

Recently Abanindranath has been engaged in making hundreds of rather unusual models, two of which (Nos. 1 & 2 of the illustrations) are reproduced here. These are excellent illustrations of the fact that he—and perhaps every real artist—is primarily a discoverer, rather than a creator, of beauty. With his keen, searching eyes he looks for things of beauty hidden in the commonplace, objects with perfect blending of light and shade, thrown away as waste material and, in fact, everything that does not enter into the accepted category of “artistic” objects.

Strangely enough, his earliest attempts at making these models—about two years ago—were confined to using stones only. Later on, as his experiments grew and his models evolved into bolder objects, he used everything odd and little, like dried roots, twigs, rusty nails, hooks and bolts, nut-shells, broken pieces of furniture, discarded toys and many other trifles rejected by normal human beings.

He has developed a technique in the production of these models, which not only eminently illustrates his character, but shows what an artist really is in relation to his creations. He would go into his garden or back-yard and pick up a root or a piece of broken flower pot, of the artistic value of which he may become conscious at once. Or he may not. But if he gets some suggestions of their inner beauty, he would carry these things to his favourite place in the verandah overlooking the garden. Here he would start looking into them with rapt interest.

He would examine them closely. He would turn them round and round, sometimes bringing them near the sunlight, sometimes away from it. He might do this for hours until he had really discovered something. He would sometimes wait a

whole day or night for the proper suggestion and then renew his research.

The artist would go on discovering in these collections of odd bits forms and shapes, movements and colours until he has seen through them thoroughly. When he has done this, he would set to the task of making what he has discovered more obvious. For, surely, if he did not, the discoveries would be lost perhaps even to himself. There are various ways in which he does it. But his one guiding principle is to effect minimum disturbance on the original structure, if at all. He may remove a tiny protruding bit from his root. But this he would do to give the root a meaning, and the removal would be justified only if it referred to a foreign element which was appended, as it were, by accident to his otherwise perfect model. Those little breakings, cuttings, scrapings, or sawings that he does on his objects, however, are definitely not sculptural activities. He does not *construct*, he does not *carve*. He only uncovers what is hidden just below the surface. If there is too much to remove, the attempt is given up.

As he is careful to remove little, he is also careful not to add much to these objects. He might put in a nail here or a peg there. He would never, however, build up or carve out a complete limb for the purpose of adding it on to the body of his object.

He would then place the chosen object on his table and, may be, hold it in an inclined way. This method of inclination is his great discovery. Without the angle the object may just be a piece of dry wood ; with the angle it becomes a live model—full of movement. When the object is fixed on a pedestal and the foregoing inclination maintained, he has done his act of composition as an artist.

In other cases, composition may be more complex. He would make a monkey out of bamboo roots. When the monkey is placed squatting on the pedestal the picture is perhaps not complete. Something more is required to give it the necessary life. The

monkey needs a fiddle. So would begin a vigorous searching by the artist. He would first look into his stores of collected elements. If he fails to find what he wants he would go out in search into his garden. He might look for days before he finds one. In the meantime he would not *make* a fiddle. He must *find* one. Otherwise his model will remain ever incomplete.

THE ARTIST'S RECENT FRESCOS.

The three other illustrations (Nos. 3 to 5) which are reproduced here are his latest frescos drawn on the outer wall of the house where he lives. These frescos too illustrate very well the working of his mind and the nature of his approach to artistic creations. Here, again, he is seen choosing for his medium something uncared for. The surface of the walls on which he has drawn was left to the influence of Nature, with the destructive process of sun and rain already at work. Characteristically, he has taken advantage of the damp marks, cracks, mildewed spots and patches of repairs on the plaster of the wall, and with minimum effort made pictures out of them. Actually the pictures were there—hidden under the disintegrating surface of the wall. He has discovered them, or rather, uncovered them, as it were, by a few strokes of his brush.

ILLUSTRATIONS

(1) THE EAGLE :

The bird is a piece of bark from a tree. It was found as it is, and is fixed on a dried branch. The height of the bird is $8\frac{1}{2}$ ".

(2) THE BEDOUIN ON A CAMEL :

The camel is a bit of dry wood and has only three legs. The missing leg is hardly noticed. The traveller is another bit of wood. His cap is an orange peel. The flask round the camel's neck and the shawl are pieces from bamboo. The height of the model is 10."



No. 1.



No. 2.



No. 3.



No. 4.



No. 5.

FRESCOS

The outlines of these frescos were drawn by means of ends of sticks burnt and charred in fire. For other colours the brushes that were used were improvised by beating and flattening ends of bamboo sticks.

(3) MAHADEVA :

Colours used : charcoal, yellow ochre & blue.

Size : 3' by 3'.

(4) THE DUCKLING :

Damp marks, untouched by the artist, are utilised as the entire foreground and background.

Size : 3' by 3'.

(5) THE COW :

Outlines of the cow were almost entirely determined by patches of recent repairs on the wall. Colours used : charcoal and Indian red.

Size : 2'6" by 1'9".

ABANINDRANATH TAGORE

An Impromptu Portrait

By O. C. GANGOLY

POLITICIANS and prima-donnas thrive on publicity stunts, while artists thrive on a sensitive and appreciative public who can appraise and understand the significant creations of Art. From this point of view, even ignorant, though lavish, patronage is no substitute for a true understanding of Art.

That Dr. Abanindranath Tagore, though he has made his mark in contemporary life, has not attained a wider popularity, which has fallen to the lot of even the average mediocre politician "who struts his hour on the stage and then is heard no more"—is due to the fact that Art is not a serious interest in Indian life, as it is lived to-day, and is not a dynamic power in Indian education. The great Swami Vivekananda has said : "That man cannot be truly religious who has not the faculty of feeling the beauty and grandeur of Art." "Non-appreciation of Art is crass ignorance." Unfortunately, the creation, contemplation and appreciation of beautiful forms *qua* Forms (except in the sphere of Music and the Letters) have never been the hobby of our educated brethren. They have never realized that the contemplation of Form is a peculiarly important spiritual exercise. A majority of Dr. Tagore's countrymen are, therefore, incapable of realizing what rich gifts this great Indian artist has given to Modern India. Probably a century hereafter, a more "educated" public, more sensitive to the appeal of beautiful forms, will realize their debt to this great Indian artist.

In many ways Dr. Abanindranath Tagore is a unique personality, and occupies a place in contemporary culture, which is a niche by itself in the Temple of Spiritual Life. Indeed, his is a face of many fascinating phases, and the space that his life-

work has covered is a formidable map of contemporary Indian culture. The products of his brush, occasionally exhibited in other parts of India in un-representative specimens (his best works have never been exhibited), and chiefly known through clumsy and inaccurate colour half-tones, have only helped to raise controversies rather than allay them, and have evoked more criticism than appreciation. His reluctance to travel, his stay-at-home habit and his refusal to write in English have prevented cultured people in other parts of India from coming in contact with a personality of rare charm and distinction, and with the greatest living genius in Indian Art, endowed with supremely high aesthetic talents. In this short and summary thumb-nail sketch one can only touch upon the various phases of his many-faced genius, but cannot convey a full-dressed portrait of the man, or the artist. There is no one now living in India, who stands exactly where he stands in Indian cultural life. We propose to make a rapid sketch of his multifaced personality—as a collector, student and exponent of Indian Art ; as an artist ; as a teacher ; as the leader of a new movement in Indian Art ; as an essayist, author, and lecturer ; and as a man.

Before Tagore started to make his unique collection of ancient masterpieces of Indian Art, in its various phases and schools, the Museums in India showed a lamentable ignorance of the history of Indian Art. As a connoisseur of Art of refined sensitiveness and of liberal sweep and insight, it was possible for him to recognize new beauties and sterling qualities in all creative works in ancient masterpieces, then despised and neglected by the art-snobs as incompetent and insignificant. He discovered a highly developed, but a wholly original aesthetic language—recorded and exemplified in the Old Masters of the East, which were *equal in a different way* to the Art of the West. In this new discovery Dr. Tagore anticipated by several years the discoveries of the English critics, Laurence Binyon and Roger Fry. In many ways India was the preceptor and predecessor of many forms of the Art of China and Japan. The

Qyzyl and the Horuiji Frescoes are the direct derivatives from Indian models. This Dr. Tagore was able to establish from many fragments of Indian paintings collected by him. This was accomplished sometime between the year 1896 and 1907. Miniatures of the Rajput and the Mughal Schools, book-illustrations of the Persian Schools, colour prints from China and Japan, the illustrations of the palm-leaf Mss. of the Buddhist Schools, the Nāyikā and Rāgiṇi pictures of Rajputana, Saiva and Vaiṣṇava paintings of the Hill Schools, metal sculptures of Nepal and Tibet, bronzes from the South, wooden and stone Images of the Pala School, *Pat* paintings of Bengal, ivories, terra-cottas, and doll-makers' art from all parts of India, and shining textiles and woven designs from the looms of the mediaeval and the later periods, in their many unique and novel creations of beauty were amply illustrated in the carefully chosen examples in the rich and valuable assemblage of the now famous Tagore Collection of Indian art, now, alas, transferred to Western India. The wide variety of the specimens not only demonstrated the wide range of Indian artistic expression, but also proved the ample range of his connoisseurship. This assembling together of a set of typical masterpieces of the old and forgotten Art of Ancient India afforded a valuable group of materials and apparatus for the study of the unique and original qualities of Indian Art, a study of which gave him valuable data and instruments for building up not only the New Art of Today, but also for indicating the path of the Newer Art of Tomorrow.

As an able expounder of, and a learned commentator on, the beauties of Indian aesthetic expression, Tagore was the first modern "student" of Indian Art. His first reactions to the beauty of Indian Art are recorded in his famous Bengali essay, later translated and published in the *Modern Review* under the title "The Trinity of Art" (*Silpa-Trimūrti*) which brought forth a storm of protest from philistine Bengal of the late nineteenth century. Tagore has not travelled much and most of the ancient monuments of India are known to him in

photographs, but his collection of selected masterpieces of paintings and tit-bits of old sculpture brought him in intimate contact with an art of which he is one of the most sensitive and profound connoisseurs. Tagore's study of Indian Art brought about a revolutionary change of outlook on the Art of Asia, and his authoritative exposition put into shade the patronising varieties of Birdwood and Vincent Smith (the Victorian "Authorities" on Indian Art) just as Roger Fry's intensive study of Italian Painting ("grinding all day at Italian Pictures" as he himself puts it) superceded the amateurish divagations of Horatio Brown and John Addington Symonds, the *interim* English authorities on Early Venetian Painting. During the short time that he was a member of Committee of the Government Art Gallery, Calcutta, and was its keeper, some of the finest examples of Nepalese and Tibeto-Nepalese Banners, and Mughal Miniatures were added to the collection. The selection of carefully chosen examples was itself a valuable lesson in what to appreciate and admire in Indian Painting. I have refrained from alluding to the great part that Havell, (then the greatest connoisseur of Indian Art,) took in assembling in Calcutta what was at that time the finest collection of Indian paintings, because much that Havell did was with the active participation of Dr. Abanindranath Tagore who was constantly at his elbow. To-day, various Indian collectors are cultivating the hobby of assembling choice examples of Indian paintings, but none of these collections have yet been able to rival the Tagore Collection.

It is impossible to deal with Dr. Tagore's work as an artist, in this summary sketch. His art has many phases and many faces, and represents too different and divergent moods and expressions to be adequately characterized under one or two denominations. The time has not yet come to judge and appraise his multifarious gifts to Indian Painting, and to the Art of the modern times. At the inception of the movement that he started about the year 1896, his paintings were designed

as organised protest against foreign influences and as a passionate plea for artistic expression through indigenous forms, a plea for the use of the old vernacular art of India as the medium of a truly National Art. He came as a rebel against the domination of the western standards of Art and as an able demonstrator and interpreter of the finest elements of indigenous Indian painting. From this point of view, his attitude towards Indian culture was more intensely national than that of any exponents of national literature. As an artist, his reputation was built in a day, when in 1914 the foremost critics and connoisseurs of Europe gathered in Paris to heap on his works a unanimous verdict of warm and reverent tributes.

Many people wrongly believe that he is a Revivalist, repeating the formulas of the ancient schools of painting. His genius consists of an uncanny power of assimilating methods and manners from all countries and schools. He has freely adapted secrets of pictorial art from East Asiatic as well as from European masters in a liberal spirit of eclecticism and in his experimental creations he has used and utilized both eastern and western points of view in a mysterious fusion of a happy and well assimilated harmony. The leading traits of his wonderful miniatures are an intensely romantic and lyrical quality, and a dreamy and mystic treatment of his subjects which lift them on a far higher level than the plane of a merely literal naturalism. Yet he has rarely dabbled in mystical or symbolical themes ; and even in the subjects borrowed from the old Hindu Paurāṇic Sagas, he has an intensely poetic manner of rendering a theme which lightens the burden and heaviness of the transcendental mysticism of the Indian Purāṇas. As the quality of his draughtsmanship reveals, his inclination has been towards the tiny miniature quality and the educated and the mannered refinement of the Mughal Qalam. The subtle grace and the "one-hair" minutiae of his lines sometimes far surpass the accomplished brushes of the Mughal masters. Yet the range of his vision, and the breadth of his palette is not confined or restricted by the narrow outlook of

the Mughal School. The extremely wide range of his vision, theme, and technique makes it very difficult to group his works under any leading characteristics or dominating tendencies and it is almost impossible to put any "label" on the general character of his works, or to characterize the leading phases of his creative brush. It is almost impossible to ascribe to the same artist, his "Illustrations to the Megha-dutam" and "Illustrations of Omar Khayyam"; his "Bond-Slave" (Dās-Khat) and "Aurangzeb"; his "Ganeśa-Janani" and his "Last Journey"—so divergent are they in vision, technique, in local colour and atmosphere. He has been very much misrepresented and, therefore, inevitably misunderstood in cheap tri-colours which vainly attempt and miserably fail to convey the subtle grace of his lines and the mystic and evanescent flavour of his colour-schemes. It is a matter of utter despair to offer any analogies or parallels to Dr. Abanindranath Tagore's paintings. At the risk of being grotesque, one is inclined to characterize his works as a curious amalgam of Burne-Jones, Bhizad, and Ogata Korin. Yet he is nothing but himself—a wizard of form and a magician of colour.

As a teacher, Dr. Tagore has no rival. It has been well said that a teacher is born and not made. His gift as a teacher even surpasses his many gifts as an artist. With his youngest pupils, he has the infinite patience of a mother, and the affectionate sympathy of a father. He has an uncanny manner of drawing out the best parts of even the most mediocre students. He never imposes his own style on his pupils. And in correcting or improving the drawing or design of a "tyro"—he thinks out on the line the novice has begun his own subject, and adopting his manner and outlook, develops the subject-matter in a manner characteristic of and belonging to his pupil, though his own manner of treating the theme may be diametrically opposite. His method of encouraging his students is quite peculiar. Grappling with a subject for some days, one of his pupils would hand over to the Master an unsuccessful

picture, with profuse apologies. With a line here, and a dash there, and a patch of colour over here, and a tint over there, Tagore would redeem the "failure" in a few seconds and as if by magic turn the unsuccessful job into a veritable masterpiece. This the writer has seen demonstrated again and again. He does not believe in merely teaching the craft of a painter, the fundamentals of picture-making, and mere technical virtuosity. His first condition is that the pupil must raise and develop his powers of thinking by studying the Indian classics (the *Rāmāyana* and the *Mahābhārata* ; other classics would perhaps offer alternatives, e. g. the *Bible*, the *Book of Job*, or the *Shāhnāmāh*) and the Indian Sagas (the *Purānās*) and the mythic lore. His syllabus of studies always includes at least a day's reading of the sacred texts, and occasional tastings of the dramatic performances. His theory is that the head of the boy must be stuffed with things dynamic, for pictures come not out of the fingers but out of the head. "That is where Pictures come from" (Sir Edward Burne-Jones).

As the leader of the new movement in Indian Art he has worked incessantly and inspired his followers and immediate disciples and given them thorough training as to how to approach the masterpieces of Indian Art, and how to extract ideas and materials for rehabilitating a new form of Art to suit the temper and temperament, the needs and conditions of modern life and the new way of thinking. His movement is based on the belief that Indian Art contains within itself infinite sources and materials and stores within its womb inexhaustible seeds to grow into newer blossoms and richer fragrance to perfume the new manner of living. Yet he had not shut out from his pupils the new rays of light from the West. He believes Indian Art may be *enriched* but it need not be *dominated* by the Art of the West. A great number of his students imbibed from him the new gospel of old Indian Art and several of them went to far corners of India to preach and practise the new gospel—this new cult at the shrine of Indian Art. Whether all his pupils have justified his

expectations and have given him the support he needed to make the movement develop to its proper height, is difficult to say. In fact, in a recent speech the leader of the movement has himself complained that many of his pupils have failed to interpret and develop Indian Art on the path he had indicated by instructive demonstrations. The movement began with him and a few of his intimate disciples. (Gogonendranath Tagore, his brother and one of the greatest of artists, stood on his own pedestal and did *not* belong to the group.) This new movement can be compared with the Pre-Raphaelite Movement in Victorian England, which likewise began with a very small group. The writer, about the year 1912, wrote to Havell, asking him whether the new ferment in Indian Art represented by the Bengal School (really "L'Ecole de Calcutta") was a lasting movement or would it fizzle out like the Pre-Raphaelites. All movements depend more on the faith and talents of honest artists than on their doctrines. One of the weak points of the movement was that the adherents to this group were held together by the dominance of the leader, and received from him the secrets of Indian Art, second-hand, as demonstrated by the Master, and had very little opportunity, (with one exception), to go straight to the masterpieces of Indian Art and extract the great lessons directly from the sources. The emotional turbulence that the reaction was stirring on the surface was not sufficient to induce the experimentalists to drink deep at the fountain-head of Indian Art itself. The secrets that Dr. Tagore had extracted from the great masterpieces by an intimate and direct study of the best examples available in his own collection—a study spread over several years, were not available to his less talented disciples, except through him. The lesser talents borrowed a derivative style, closely tied to their Guru,—but had no roots in the fertile soil of old Indian Art itself, which was still surviving in many places at the time the movement began. Besides, most of the earlier participants in the movement had the benefit of sitting at the feet of the leader himself, and learning the fundamentals of art at first-hand from

the Guru, and of studying Dr. Tagore's own creations and methods of approach at close quarters, but the later pupils who joined the movement had not the same benefit and advantage. Besides, the disciples who were sent out to distant centres had not the atmosphere of the birth-place of the movement, and had not the moral support of any appreciative public, and had to work in a vacuum against an environment hostile to the growth of the movement, and in the teeth of opposition of educated men having no faith in the fundamentals of Indian Art. Yet some of these brave artists, sent out to distant outposts, have upheld the banner with unflinching courage and devotion.

If Dr. Abanindranath Tagore had not left a single example of his brush, his place in contemporary culture would still be secure and unassailable. For, if as a wielder of the brush, he has few equals in India (he is, undoubtedly, one of the world's greatest living artists), as wielder of the pen he has no equal. He commands a prose style, which in simplicity and *bravura* of technique, as in profundity of thought, and in sparkling and surprising humour, is an invaluable and most original contribution to modern Bengali literature. Some of his earliest writings which appeared in the *Sādbanā* and in the *Bhārati* ante-date his appearance as an artist of talent. He made a name in literature long before he established his fame in art. His earliest literary publications, *Sakuntala* and *Kshirer Putul*, are the earliest contribution to juvenile literature in Bengal. Not having any manner of academic training (his exploits in his school days are not very brilliant pages in his life), he escaped the evils and the baneful influences of literary education, and left his few years at the school, with all his aesthetic faculties unimpaired. Apart from the fact that he has developed a prose style unique in modern literature, he has specialized in story-telling for children and many of his children's stories are living monuments of his literary skill, and his intimate knowledge of the child-mind and the psychology of children. When a few years ago, the Calcutta University honoured this artist-writer (who had

never shone at his school and never matriculated or passed a single examination) with a Doctorate of Literature, everybody agreed that the honour could not have been conferred on a worthier literary genius. His little essays on Art, frequently published in the *Bhārati*, in incisive, sparkling yet simple language, are not only rich contributions to the science of aesthetics, but also to the art of the letters. His magnificent series of lectures delivered several years ago as Bageswari Professor of Fine Art at the Calcutta University (recently reprinted) will stand as his solid contribution to art and literature. Having attempted once or twice to translate his stray essays on art into English, the writer is aware that it is impossible to make accurate versions in English of the magic simplicity and the subtle nuances of his deep thoughts on art, and his witty way of demonstrating his ideas in a manner all his own. Yet, it is hoped that some day some competent person will attempt the task of rendering in English his thoughts on Art for the benefit of a larger public. It is claimed that his essays and lectures on Art are the most original contribution to aesthetic thinking in any part of the world.

As a man, Tagore the artist is blessed with a personality of singular charm and magnetism. With occasional outbursts of emotional effusions, caustic temper, and eccentricity, inevitable in an aesthetic temperament, his normal moods are so full of sweetness, grace, sincerity and a spontaneous intimacy, and enriched with a ready-made witty philosophy of life, interspersed with lofty tit-bits on Art,—that to talk to him is not only a valuable education, but a rich spiritual experience. It is difficult sometimes to say if his wit outflows his wisdom or vice-versa. His open-handed and sincere confession of his own failings and weaknesses gives him the pathetic charm of a child, and the sad helplessness of an octogenarian. If one is fortunate to catch him at one of his best moods, one can get anything out of him, even some of his most valuable possessions—the sure proof of a large and charitable heart. He has given away more pictures painted

by himself than he has been in a mood to sell. His eccentricities are something baffling in their self-contradictions. Some of his grave comments and reflections on men and things and Art uttered with full and deep conviction one morning would be contradicted with equal emphasis the following morning. And it is sometimes very difficult and embarrassing to his first pupils to attempt to discover the fundamental unity underlying his day to day contradictions. His personal and parental interest in the welfare and physical well-being of his disciples is one of the most attractive and human qualities of his heart. The big Tagore family has produced big and gigantic personalities, and towering talents, but in the big gallery of family portraits, Abanindranath ("Aban" as they affectionately call him), and his sweet personality occupies a pedestal of affectionate "reverence" in the heart of the large circle of his relatives and kinsmen. His recent bereavement has made him sad and banished the ever present smile on his face and robbed the mischievous twinkles from his eyes. But he has accepted the severe blow of the loss of the partner of his life with singular calm and philosophical resignation. The sorrow has lent a grey overtone over his colourful personality, but has also invested it with a sanctified halo. Many miles away from the din and bustle of the city of Calcutta, the Indian priest of beauty, and the apostle of culture sits quietly in his rural retreat, weaving out patterns of various forms of birds and animals out of broken twigs and branches of trees,— *not* brooding on Death but meditating on Life and its ever emanating new forms of expression.

India has yet to pay her tribute and render her homage to her greatest genius in art, who is also one of the greatest personalities in contemporary life and destined to leave indelible marks on the pages of the history of human culture, for Art is one of the most shining pages of that book, which he has taught us to read and understand.

THE ART OF ABANINDRANATH TAGORE*

By BENODEBEHARI MUKHERJEE

THE GENIUS of Abanindranath best expresses itself in his paintings. The only way to know Abanindranath, the artist, is to see his pictures. The other role that he plays in the history of modern Indian painting is that of the founder of a new movement. In this light his position is historically significant. The fame of Abanindranath as the reviver of Indian tradition and founder of a new movement, is in no way less than that of Abanindranath, the artist. It is possible to estimate by facts and figures the historical value of Abanindranath's genius. Although we may not enter into the heart of his creation through facts and their analysis, yet such discussion helps our appreciation and judgment by placing it in proper historical perspective.

VARIOUS OPINIONS ON ABANINDRANATH'S WORK

The unique genius of Abanindranath was revealed for the first time in his Radha-Krishna series of paintings (1895). These pictures introduce a new epoch in his own life as well as in the field of modern Indian painting. When we compare them with the contemporary works, we appreciate the achievement of the artist and the historical value of the paintings. On the one hand, there were different schools such as Delhi-Qalam, Patna-Qalam, with their stereotyped tradition, conventional training, rigid rules, a certain amount of craftsmanship and the decorative structure of Indian painting. In the north the Kāngrā-Qalam in the Rajput tradition was more of a living character. But it will not be wrong to state that Indian painting as a whole had degenerated into an extravagance of decorativeness and was extremely lifeless and dry. On the other hand, the so-called European tradition that had just been imported from England

* Translated from the original Bengali by Nirmal Chandra Chatterjee.

did not also give us an insight into the real European art. The British academic convention taught us merely to imitate Nature. However different in their character, both these Indian and foreign works, though often full of skill, were stereotyped and lifeless. "Nowhere does Art," wrote Havell referring to the degenerated taste of this period, "suffer more from charlatanism than in India. There is no respect for Art in the millionaire who invests his surplus wealth in pictures and the costliest furniture so that his taste may be admired or his wealth envied by his poor brethren."*

In the paintings of Abanindranath we for the first time discover an aesthetic quality rare in contemporary works. But the young educated group of those days had neither the opportunity nor the training to distinguish artistic creation from slavish imitation, having been so long fed on works of mere craftsmanship. So when the paintings of Abanindranath first appeared before the public our connoisseurs were well-nigh obsessed with what seemed to them deficiencies in the technical knowledge of the artist. They were bewildered and asked, Where was anatomy? Where was cast shadow and why was there no perspective? Let us give an example to show the light in which these critics viewed Abanindranath's painting with its novel technique :

"Is it the underlying principle of Indian pictorial art that one should paint such subjects, or distort them in such a way that they will not resemble in any way the real objects or people will not be able to recognise them? In other words, is it the soul of the so-called Indian painting to contradict nature? The only aim of traditional Indian painting seems to be the flouting of all naturalness. In conception of beauty as well as in their nauseating colour-schemes the works of the neo-Indian painters fall in no way short of the specimens one meets with in way-side shops and pages of old almanacs. Under the canons of Indian painting

* *The Basis for Artistic and Industrial Revival in India* : By E. B. Havell.

the limbs and fingers are made unnatural and extremely elongated. Any work that defies rules of anatomy becomes eligible for the gallery of Indian paintings. Imagination that in its recklessness shrinks not to elongate endlessly the hands and feet is not worth its name. Why the pictures painted according to Indian tradition are so much contrary to nature and bonelessly serpentine passes our understanding.”*

Among the newly educated society everywhere there prevailed in their art criticism sarcasm in place of argument and fascination for skill in place of aesthetic judgment. To them the verdict of an Englishman used to be the last word in matters of art and accordingly there could not be a picture worth the name which did not conform to the rules of anatomy, perspective and cast shadow. This love for exact copy of nature and cast shadow had not only blinded the vision of the educated public; even the scholars, historians, archaeologists—people deeply conversant with Indian *Silpa-śāstra* and iconography—were not immune from it. Even they perhaps implicitly believed that a picture without cast shadow was an anomaly. Had it not been so, could ever a scholar pass the following remark?

“In Chinese painting there exists no trace to show an effort on the part of the artist to add an effect of light and shade. This should not induce us to presume that their teacher the Indian artist too was indifferent about it.”†

Not only ignorance but wrong information had totally vitiated our taste.

It was Havell who first pointed out that we were imitating third rate western painting only because we had no knowledge of real Indian art. So long there had been researches enough on Indian sculpture, architecture and painting from archaeological point of view, but none of the scholars had the boldness to emphasise the essential aesthetic quality of them. It is to Havell's undying credit that he was the first to do so.

* See *Sāhitya*, April-May, 1910. Translation of this as well as of the other quotations from Bengali writings is mine.—Tr.

† “*Bhāratat Prācīn Citra-Kalā*” by Ramaprasad Chanda, in *Pravāsi*, Nov.-Dec. 1918.

"It has been always my endeavour in the interpretation of Indian ideals, to obtain a direct insight into the artist's meaning, without relying on modern archaeological conclusions ; and without searching for the clue which may be found in Indian literature."*

This statement of Havell's was criticised by a renowned archaeologist of Bengal as that of a conceited person averse to scholarly habit. Havell's view is indeed not free from fallacy. And it is true that he had to take recourse to history and ancient literature to interpret Indian ideals. But at that time such an assertion was necessary. Besides Havell, Sir John Woodroffe, Sister Nivedita and Coomaraswamy in course of their writings directed the attention of the people towards the aesthetic tradition of India.

It was during this period when Havell was trying to revive the Indian artistic culture that he met in 1897 Abanindranath Tagore. Havell it was who proclaimed Abanindranath as a painter in the Indian tradition. Scholars, however, refused to acknowledge him as one. With quotations from *Silpa-śāstras* they never tired of showing that the work of Abanindranath and his group was absolutely non-Indian. Their paintings were not up to the Indian ideal, inasmuch as they disregarded the traditional ~~canons~~ such as *tāla*, *māna*, *pramāna*, and so forth. Not that their position was entirely at fault, for Abanindranath never wholly belonged to any exclusive tradition. But that he had successfully expressed the modern mind in modern language did perhaps escape the notice of the scholars, though today we have no difficulty in appreciating the fact. Hence we find, by a strange irony of events, that while on the one hand his claim as an Indian artist was repudiated by the scholars, on the other hand, he was being hailed by another group of critics, *littérateurs* and patriots, as the founder of neo-Indian Art. When Havell and Coomaraswamy discussed the works of Abanindranath and his followers they laid the greatest stress upon their Indianness.

**The Ideals of Indian Art* : By E. B. Havell.

"The work of the modern school of Indian painters in Calcutta is a phase of the national re-awakening. The subjects chosen by the Calcutta painters are taken from Indian history, romance and epic, and from the mythology and religious literature and legends, as well as from the life of the people around them. Their significance lies in their distinctive Indianness. They are, however, by no means free from European and Japanese influence. The work is full of refinement and subtlety in colour, and of a deep love of all things Indian ; but, contrasted with the Ajanta and Mughal and Rajput paintings which have in part inspired it, it is frequently lacking in strength. The work should be considered as a promise rather than a fulfilment."*

This same emphasis we notice also in the remarks of Havell :

"If neither Mr. Tagore nor his pupils have yet altogether attained to the splendid technique of the old Indian painters, they have certainly revived the spirit of Indian art, and besides, as every true artist will, invested their work with a charm distinctively their own. For their work is an indication of that happy blending of Eastern and Western thought. . . . †

Here in these quotations, we have a clear statement of the position of the new experiments in Indian Art in Bengal up to the year 1911. While their effort at reviving the classical Indian Ideal is acknowledged, it is significant that in none of these statements is there any claim made as to its success. As a matter of fact, the work of these artists became popular as part of the then national movement. Abanindranath's position as a national artist was of prime importance to his admirers, but the language he had evolved for the purpose was not yet grasped by them. Their conception of its significance was much too vague and nebulous. Since they were well-versed in the lore of religious philosophy and literature, they were naturally inclined to interpret

* Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy : as quoted by V. Smith in his *A History of Fine Art in India and Ceylon*. Chap. IX, p. 848.

† E. B. Havell, as quoted in *Ibid.*

the artist's work in the light of metaphysical conceptions, literary symbols and religious ideas. Let us cite an example :

"The leaders of the neo-Indian Art, in the freshness and vitality of their zeal, do not stop short at the ideal of art for art's sake ; they are also keen on giving expression to the spiritual impulses which are rooted in the soul of the Hindus. Thus the present revivalist movement in Indian Art is in implicit harmony with the present thought movement, aspirations and the patriotic ideals of the country. In the present picture (Storm at Puri, 1911) of Mr. Tagore, there is a strip of sand in grey and a suggestion of the distant storm-tossed sea. But that is enough to impress on our mind the wild nature of India in all her fury and melancholy. Hence he who would look for bright sun-lit landscapes in this exhibition would be disappointed. Here the artist is concerned with neither that outward appearance of India which the European tourists observe, nor her greenery which the beauty-seeking artists of Europe try to portray. Here is the real, essential India in her intimate sadness—symbolic, spiritual, ideal and ethereal."*

Supporters of Abanindranath had all tried to view his work from this philosophic and literary angle. As a result, the general public has not yet risen above the temptation of believing that modern Indian painting is spiritual in its significance. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of the early critics of this school. But unfortunately such exuberance blinds us to the simple fact that a painting is, above all, something to be looked at. It was enough satisfaction to the contemporary critics that Abanindranath and his group were engaged in the re-discovery of the aesthetic ideal of India. But they were forgetful of the fact that, as in literature so in art, idea has to be expressed through adequate language. Whatever the Indian ideal might have been, how it is expressed in the body of art would have been made known to them had they realized that

"The evolution of Indian art is organised by the rhythm

* Charu Chandra Bannerjee in *Pravāsi*, July—Aug. 1918.

which organises the work of art, and nothing is left to chance, and little to extraneous influence Its movements are strictly regulated. In no other civilisation, therefore, we find such minute prescriptions for proportions and movements. The relation of the limbs, every bent and every turning of the figures represented, are of the deepest significance. This dogmatism, far from being sterile, conveys regulations how to be artistically tactful, so that no overstrain, no inadequate expression, and no weakness ever will become apparent. The regulations are a code of manners.”*

Let us now leave behind all these controversies and acquaint ourselves directly with Abanindranath’s paintings. That will help us to estimate the exact value of this discussion.

II

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ABANINDRANATH’S GENIUS

Abanindranath’s fame in India and abroad mainly rests on the fact that he is the reviver of Indian Art, whereas, in fact, he never wanted to rediscover anything with any specific effort. He had studied the canons of aesthetics, had written on “*Saḍaṅga*” (Six Limbs of Painting)† and in his earliest book *Bhārata-Silpa Paricaya*, had even pleaded for the Indian ideal; yet in his own creations he did not adhere to them. In a word, in spite of his immense enthusiasm and regard for Indian aesthetic ideal, he never adopted the mode of expression peculiar to Indian painting or sculpture.

The address that Abanindranath delivered to his pupils in 1909 clearly reveals his mind at that time:

“I have noticed that when you have to paint a beautiful landscape you go to a garden or a river bank and start painting the trees, plants, flowers and animals from observation. I wonder at this effort of yours to capture beauty in such a cheap

* Dr. Stella Kramrisch in *Modern Review*, Dec. 1922.

† The writing referred to has been reproduced in the present volume.—Ed.

trap. Do you not realise that beauty is not something external and that it lies deep within ? Soak your heart first in the shower of Kalidasa's poetry, then lift your eyes towards the sky. You will then appreciate the eternal rhythm of the ever-fresh cloud-messenger. First soak yourself in the great poet Valmiki's description of the sea, then proceed to paint a sea of your own."*

What was the object of this advice ? It is obvious that he wanted to lead the mind of his pupils to the world of imagination and idea. Yet he did not suggest anything as to the mode by means of which they could express that idea. That the outer form of an object is everything, and that art consists in the imitation of that form, was ignored by his disciples and a contrary belief came into vogue. The form of an object, they believed, was nothing, and imitation had no place in the expression of idea. This belief may be termed as the extreme aesthetic ideal. It is a very personal faith and, since it does not belong to the nation as a whole, it cannot be called the National Ideal. Hence with least hesitation we may say that Abanindranath has followed the ideal neither of any nation nor of any time ; he has been guided by his own individual taste. He has a thorough understanding of the canons of Indian art, his intellect comprehends them, but, one feels, that his heart has not accepted them. Let us quote a passage from his latest book :

"Vāyu (Air) in Indian tradition is conceived as a god, but his representation in art is as much a child's toy as those of our other gods, Indra, Chandra (Moon), Varuna (Water). They are almost same in form and expression without much difference. Thirty-three crores in their number, they are shaped from the same mould, as it were, and represent the same type, the only difference being in *vāhana* (the animal carrying the god), *mudra* (gesture of hands, etc.) and such details. A god when seated on *Garuḍa* is Viṣṇu ; riding on seven horses he is Sūrya (Sun God). A goddess when she sits on *Makara* (a

mythological water animal) is recognised as Ganga (the Ganges represented as divinity) ; on a tortoise she is Yamuna. The Vedic deities, Indra, Chandra, Vāyu, Varuṇa, for example, are distinct in the conception of their form and grandeur, just as the Greek deities, Apollo, Venus, Jupiter, Juno and others are. This variety of conception is rarely to be met with, however, in gods and goddesses as imaged in India. With negligible variations in *āsana*, *vāhana*, colouring and such other accessories, the same image is made to represent a variety of gods. Vāyu (Air), Varuṇa (Water) can on no account be identical in their thoughts and expression. As far as I know, it is only a Greek sculptor, a replica of whose work I came across in the collection of Jagadish Chandra Bose, who could carve in stone the movement of the wind. In the folds of the drapery of the goddess the breeze from the Mediterranean seemed to sing and play.”*

Such is the considered opinion of Abanindranath in his mature age and one dare not overlook it. A study of the course of development of the artist's genius leads us to the same conclusion.

Once the decorative forms of Indian and foreign paintings had charmed Abanindranath. We see that expressed in his paintings of the Radha-Krishna series (1895). But there his previous training in European technique had influenced the work and did not allow in them the Indian decorative frame to remain absolutely pure. As a result these pictures had become something which was neither a true European miniature nor an Indian decorative painting. But, no doubt, in them we had a new type of work belonging to a new age, a type nowhere to be found in those days.

Both Indian and European styles of painting that had remained static so long were united in the paintings of Abanindranath and became vitally living. Herein lies the greatest contribution of Abanindranath. He gave us in painting

* Abanindranath Tagore in *Bāgeswari Śilpa-Prabandhāvali* (p. 74-75), published by the Calcutta University.

the language of the modern age. However immature that language, we had at last the opportunity to express ourselves through it. When Abanindranath was painting the Radha-Krishna series (1895) he was hardly known. It was in 1897 that, through his contact with E. B. Havell, he became known to the public. Havell introduced him as the reviver of the Indian ideal of painting. We have already discussed how his critics were disappointed to notice in his work the lack of realism and naturalness. With the aid of Havell, Abanindranath studied very carefully and critically the paintings of the Mughal school. He was fascinated to see their wonderful workmanship and the delicate, decorative skill. "Infuse *bhāva* (idea or feeling) in the picture," he exclaimed. What exactly he implied by the word *bhāva* he never explained anywhere in those days. But a definite change was to be noticed in his paintings which first expressed itself in "Bhārata Mātā" (1902) and gradually matured in his illustrations from Omar Khayyam (1906-8). The first thing that we observe there is the loosening of the decorative compactness which was a characteristic of his earlier work. A quality of space has entered into them displacing the surface quality. This change was due, no doubt, to his recent contact with Mughal and Japanese paintings, yet we often fail to remember in this connection the influence of his knowledge of the European technique or what may better be termed the Academic science of painting.

The technique of Abanindranath got its ingredients from Mughal, Japanese and European traditions. Amongst these the pre-eminent quality of the art traditions of Europe and of modern Japan is naturalistic ; while, from the standpoint of expression, the style of the Mughal court-artists may be called realistic. Today one need not hesitate to admit that the technique of Abanindranath is of the realistic type. But this realism of his paintings is neither of the British Academic type, nor of the Japanese, nor even of the Mughal type. It is a realism absolutely his own ; to be more precise, one might say that he presented

the decorative form of the Mughal school in all its meticulous delicacy in a light more real, and the technique he adopted for this purpose did not belong to any specific tradition. It was wholly a creation of his own in order to express his own idea. Thus Abanindranath is not the founder of any tradition in painting ; he is the creator of a new style.

There are two reasons why Abanindranath's style, which is the most significant quality of his painting, has remained ignored. First, because of the tendency to attribute metaphysical and symbolic interpretations to his creations ; and second, because in the days of his early fame, when there was most discussion about him, too much emphasis was laid on him as the *Indian* artist, and, instead of taking account of the character of his style, people compared it with the old styles and tried to discover how close he had approached the Mughal School. Disregarding his style, every one in those days discussed the idea in his pictures.

From no standpoint can the name of Abanindranath be included among the artists of the traditional school of India. His extreme aesthetic opinion, his realistic (in contradistinction to naturalistic) outlook, and above all his individual style leave no room for such inclusion. Abanindranath is the modern Indian artist of extraordinary genius, whose like did not long appear in the field of Indian painting. Here one may ask : Has then the Indian art ideal not yet been revived ? Is not Abanindranath the reviver of the new age in Indian painting ? A little more discussion on the artist will make these points clear.

Abanindranath has created nothing in Indian traditional line. But by dint of his wonderful talent he effected a fusion of western and oriental techniques and evolved a new style in painting. The problem of absorbing the western technique without detriment to the character of their own art-tradition, has been a serious one to the modern artists, not only in India but also in China and Japan. The success with which Abanindranath solved it is perhaps unique in the history of modern

oriental Art. It came very naturally to him. Mentally he seems to have been in tune with the attitude of the western artists, else how could be explained in his paintings such pre-eminence of the qualities of texture (not of the surface but of the objects), atmosphere and colour symphony, typically western? The ease with which he exploited these was due to his early training in western technique. With this attitude and training he approached the oriental art which is inherently different in its kind as well as quality. The result was that in his paintings the oriental body received a western garb and the latter in its turn influenced the structure of the body.

This will explain why we have called Abanindranath's achievement unique but not strictly Indian. To his early admirers, who were extremely patriotic in their zeal and attitude, this analysis, I am sure, could never have been palatable. But it must be candidly stated that we modern artists of Bengal are nevertheless grateful to him, for it is he who has directed and emboldened us to draw with least diffidence upon foreign sources. And for the turning of our mind and outlook towards the early Indian mythology and aesthetic culture, we are indebted to Havell and Coomaraswamy. The impress left upon this by the *Swadeshi* (National) movement is too deep to be overlooked. The modern mind could neither have been kept aesthetically alive by means of the stereotyped Orissan sculpture that is current today and the paintings of the Patna-Qalam, or similar other conventional schools, nor could the inroads of the English Academic art have been checked, had not Abanindranath opened for us a new path of self-expression.

It is the influence of Abanindranath that has made us modern. And now that we have become modern we turn to understand the classical Indian art. It must be clearly realised that we have not become modern through the pursuance of the old. When in England, indeed almost everywhere in Europe, sheer academic jugglery in light and shade was being practised in the name of art, it was an achievement of no mean order for an

Indian artist to have risen above the lure of naturalism and to have visualised the ideal of real creative art. Hence we repeat that Abanindranath was never the leader of a movement for the revival of the early Indian tradition. His was a movement that brought about a genuine aesthetic revival in our country. From this standpoint very high is the position of Abanindranath in the cultural history of India.

III

LITERATURE AND THE PAINTINGS OF ABANINDRANATH

The deepest and the most lasting influence in Abanindranath's life was that of Rabindranath. Aesthetically, Abanindranath was born and brought up in an atmosphere of literature and his talent expressed itself simultaneously along the twin channels of literature and painting. So even is the bias that it is difficult to say which of the two is his main field. A poet's emotion, on the one hand, and an artist's outlook on the other,—a blending as well as conflict of these two, has given shape to Abanindranath's genius. When in his inimitable language Abanindranath, the story-teller, tells us stories, our mind enraptured is carried along the stream of words and is content to hear them and enjoy, and never stops a moment to catch their precise meaning. As we listen, there arise pictures before our eyes, but the moment we try to grasp them they vanish in a mist of words, metaphors and similes, and out of that haze emerges a picture, perhaps quite new. But only for a while : then again everything melts away,—words, metaphors and even pictures, and there rings only the music of the words. From this music we in no time oscillate back and begin to see bits of pictures again. This swing of mind between word and picture is evident in all his writings such as, *Rāj-Kāhini*, *Kshirer Putul*, *Bhutpatrir Desh*, *Budō Anglā*, etc. They are all pictures born of the cadence of words.

And what about the paintings of Abanindranath, the artist ?

One may very well say that they are forms arising out of the symphony of colour. Like the symphony of words in his writings, this symphony of colour is the chief attraction of his paintings. Whatever suggestion of form we catch remains concealed behind a veil of colour. Very rarely we meet face to face with the world of form in Abanindranath. Considered in this light, the world that the Arabian Nights series reveal to us is a rarity in the wide realm of Abanindranath's work. The suggestion of form in most of his other paintings is so faint and delicate that even the artist himself seems to doubt if it would reach the mind of others. Hence what a desperate effort we notice in him to explain the pictures beforehand ! This gives us an insight into Abanindranath's practice of adding names to paintings and explains the importance he attaches to them.

Style is the chief attraction in Abanindranath's literary as well as pictorial composition ; the most important point in them being, how he tells in the one and how he shows in the other. He does not tell to make us understand anything, nor does he paint to make us recognise anything. His aim and ideal in literature as well as in painting is best made clear by his own words :

"If words are pictures spoken, where sounds weld themselves into form, then painting is story in form (*rūp-kathā*) told by colour and line." Truly the paintings of Abanindranath are *rūp-kathās**—tales told by colour and the gesture of form, verging on the border of fairy tales.

* There is a pun on the word *rūp-kathā*, which ordinarily means "fairy tale" and may be literally rendered as *rūp*, form ; *kathā*, story or narration. Tr.

A CHRONOLOGY OF ABANINDRANATH'S PAINTINGS

By BENODEBEHARI MUKHERJEE

A study and understanding of the gradual development of Abanindranath's paintings is the purpose of this chronological catalogue ; hence I have taken every care to mention here all his important paintings as well as other works of any significance. Though not exhaustive, it may be considered complete and comprehensive in so far as it is sufficient to understand the development of his art. By increasing the number of paintings in the list the general trend which I have presented will in no way be affected. Only a few of Abanindranath's early drawings and later pastel portraits are dated ; generally the date is missing in his paintings, which makes it difficult to place their exact position in the sequence. However, it is possible to classify and arrange his paintings in different periods. The following catalogue is an attempt in that line.

Abanindranath's paintings may be classified broadly into three periods, according to the development of his technique.

(1) Up to the year 1895 pure European technique.

(2) In 1895 he was presented with an album of Indian paintings of comparatively modern style (Lucknow Qalam) and made for the first time his acquaintance with Indian art. His paintings then tended to be decorative, though they had a closer resemblance to the European miniature than to Rajput or Mughal paintings. This particular technique he never used afterwards. From 1897 to 1900 is the period when his art developed some affinity with Rajput paintings and Hindu art tradition.

(3) Between 1901-1902 he became acquainted with the modern Japanese artists and their work. He developed a technique of his own. From now on there is no fundamental change in it, though outwardly some of his accents and traits and his mode of workmanship may here and there differ.

A Broad Survey of the Development of His Technique and Style.

The Wash Painting

I. TECHNIQUE.

First Period : drawing in pencil ; space is filled in mostly with transparent colour ; the whole surface is laid over with a colour-wash ; the colour-wash is allowed to dry ; the paper is dipped into water and taken out to dry ; the colour is now fixed. After this another coating of colour (same colour or different harmonious colours mostly transparent) may be given. This process may be repeated indefinitely and the colours may be varied with each wash. The purpose of this kind of colour-wash is to make the object hazy and break the surface of the paper in the simplest manner possible and give an idea of space. This was the first stage in the technique he evolved, and was the beginning of what was famous later as "Abanindranath's wash". The picture is at the end heightened with line.

Second Period : The colour coating in his wash became more and more complex and he began to use opaque colour and transparent colour alternately for wash ; and modelling took the place of line in the completion of a picture.

Abanindranath has used this technique of wash painting in three ways. First : The quality of the picture is flat, with a suggestion of space finished with line ; there is little attempt to show the texture of different objects. An extreme example of this is "Bhārata Mātā". Second : This is akin to Western painting (three dimensional) where the atmosphere is shown as well as the texture of each individual object. "Mother and Child" is an example of this kind. Third : A style which is a kind of mixture of the above two and may be regarded as typical of Abanindranath. It is akin to Mughal painting with an addition of realistic atmosphere. (The atmosphere in Mughal paintings is rather conventional). "The sun worshipper" is an example of this third kind.

All these three types of paintings are found repeated all

through his career. Although they do not appear in any regular order, their sequence may be roughly determined by his palette and mode of finishing.

II. TREATMENT OF PORTRAITS.

Upto 1900 portraiture is not particularly important in Abanindranath's paintings,—face being part and parcel of the total figure. Since 1905 face and the facial expression became more and more important. Influence of Mughal portrait paintings and his personal observation are discernible in the "Omar Khayyam" series. Orissa tour in 1911 inspired him in various ways. From now on a new type of face appears in his pictures. Here the portraits are less conventional than his previous realistic works. Interest in portraiture grows gradually and a change of facial type is noticeable from 1920 to 1925. Even in this period, if he paints Mughal or any other conventional subject, the portrait is pronouncedly realistic. In 1926-30 we see Tagore mainly as a portrait painter. (It will be an interesting study to distinguish the portraits and facial types in his pictures. His own portrait as well as those of his relations, servants and acquaintances have appeared in many of his pictures.) Compared to his portrait painting, Abanindranath's treatment of landscape has changed very little.

III. MATERIAL.

Upto the year 1923, Abanindranath used particularly English hand-made paper for his paintings. After 1923 we find him painting also on cloth, of various textures, such as khadi and other cloth in use. It may be mentioned here that Abanindranath never used silk for painting except for very minor works, such as autographs, etc. So all those paintings on silk supposed to have been done by Abanindranath are not originals. The material used is thus one of the clues to determining the period of his pictures.

IV. THE USE OF SIGNATURE AND SEAL.

Till 1913 we find him signing himself, *A. N. Tagore*, *Sri Abanindra* (in Bengali), *Abanindra* (in Bengali and Devnagri) and very rarely *Aban*. The most well known of these is *Abanindra* in Bengali in the Persian style and *Abanindra* in Devnagri.

In 1913 Okakura presented him with a Chinese seal. From then onwards Abanindranath used the seal. As the seal was used together with the signature, the placing of the seal was of importance. Heretofore the signature had no importance ; after this it was placed intentionally.

From 1916 onwards both the seal and signature came to be a definite part of his composition. From about 1918 (?) he used another seal—that of Gaṇapati.

Difficulties in Cataloguing the Pictures.

Only by seeing the title it is very difficult to identify the picture and vice-versa. I have detected that a copy by Iswari Prasad was exhibited in Abanindranath's name. A major portion of Abanindranath's works is in the collection of his family and his relatives ; of this they have no standard catalogue. The pictures in private collections are so widely scattered that it is very difficult to trace their whereabouts. It is still more difficult to know about the pictures that have gone abroad. I have derived most help from the Kala-Bhavana Museum Collection, the only public collection where there are a sufficient number of Abanindranath's works for comparative study. But, unfortunately, owing to the precautions made necessary by the war, free access to these pictures as well as to those in private collections has become restricted, which has made my task even more difficult than it normally should have been. Under the circumstances, I cannot claim either absolute authenticity or completeness for the list I

have compiled, though I have spared no pains to make it as complete and as reliable as possible. I am indebted to Sj. Mohanlal Ganguli for the list of paintings in the possession of Abanindranath and his near relatives.

Information concerning Abanindranath up to the year 1900, I have tried to obtain from the artist himself. Unfortunately, he was not able to mention anything definite either about the date of his going to Gilhardi, or when he met E. B. Havell, or the date of the visit of Taikwan and Hisida to his home. Sometimes he refers to historical events, sometimes he mentions his probable age and at other times local contemporary events ; and from these suggestions I have tried to fix the date of his studentship under Gilhardi and Palmer, his meeting Havell and his acquaintance with the Japanese painters. Wherever there is any doubt about the exact date, I have placed a question mark to indicate its uncertainty. My opinions in the case of such of Abanindranath's paintings as I have not seen personally are based on the judgment of Sj. Nandalal Bose.

1890-1895. *Period of Training in Western Technique.*

The years between 1880 and 1890 were the period of Abanindranath's general education. Only after 1890 he took to painting seriously. Hence my catalogue begins from 1890. Works of Abanindranath's student days were never perhaps exhibited or even published anywhere, with the exception of a few sketches done between 1890 and 1895, which appeared in the *Four Arts Annual*, 1935. According to Mr. Mukul Chandra Dey two of those reproductions—'Coconut Tree' and 'The Lamp' [1890]—are the first sketches by Abanindranath.

In 1890 Abanindranath was student of Mr. O. Gilhardi (then Vice-Principal, Government School of Arts, Calcutta) ; stayed under him for six months ; left Calcutta for Monghyr on a sketching tour ; stayed at Monghyr for nearly six months ; worked mainly with pen and ink and water colour.

1890-93. Illustrations of Rabindranath's *Chitrāṅgadā* : line drawings 32 in number ; published in the first special edition of *Chitrāṅgadā*.

Illustrations of Dwijendranath Tagore's *Swapna Prayān* and also some stray illustrations of Rabindranath Tagore's poems (e.g., *Bimbabati*, *Badhu*), published in *Sādhana*. His last works of this series of book illustrations are those of *Kshirer Putul*. They are the first original works of Abanindranath Tagore [Coll. A].*

1893-95. During this period Abanindranath was the student of Mr. Palmer, his second teacher in Western technique. Under Mr. Palmer he received thorough training in European academic technique. During this period he had as his colleague the famous oil painter, Mr. J. P. Ganguli of Calcutta.† His work of this period consists mostly of pen and ink studies from life, pastel portraits and a few oil paintings. Though his drawings were quite mature in his pen and ink sketches, they are more significant for light and shade (colour and texture) than for form.

Portrait of Rabindranath Tagore in pastel. Portrait of Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. Portrait of Dwarkanath Tagore—a copy in oil [Coll. Pradyot Kumar Tagore]. A few paintings in Ravi Varma's style : *Māyā Mriga* [Coll. Dinesh Sen] ; *Sakuntala* and *Sandhya* [Coll. Naresh Mukherjee] : done during the later part of 1894 and the beginning of 1895.

1895-1897. In 1895 Abanindranath received some English illuminations from a European lady and at the same time received an album of Indian paintings of Lucknow Qalam from one of his relatives. He was attracted by the decorative quality of these paintings (both Indian and European). His

* For the sake of convenience the following abbreviations have been used in the list : Coll.=Collection ; Sig.=Signature ; A=Abanindranath Tagore ; Bose=Nandalal Bose ; C=Calcutta Museum ; K=Kala-Bhavana, Visva-Bharati.

† See Mr. Ganguli's *Reminiscences of Abanindranath* in the present Number.—*Ed.*

first attempt in this line was an illustration of one of Chandidas' poems.

The Radha-Krishna Series : the total number of pictures is 20. He did more than one version of some of the Radha-Krishna Series. Some pictures of a later version are in the collection of Kala-Bhavana Museum (Santiniketan) and the Calcutta Museum. The original set is in the possession of Mr. Alokendranath Tagore. In technique and treatment the Radha-Krishna Series is more akin to European miniature than to the Rajput and Mughal paintings. Here also one sees the artist's interest in texture.

1897-1900. In 1897 Abanindranath met Mr. E. B. Havell. For the first time he saw masterpieces of Rajput and Mughal paintings. Pictures of this period in continuation of his earlier effort [1895-97] are, typically, bright in colour and decorative in composition.

Illustrations of Betāl Panchabiṇṣhati. Birth of Buddha. Buddha & Sujātā. Building of Taj. Death of Shahjahan [oil, on wood. Though painted during this period, the style belongs to a later period. A copy done by the artist in water colour for Mr. Montague]. Bahadur Shah—the last Mughal Emperor. Bajra Mukut [Coll. C]. Ritu Samhār [Coll. C]—illustrates Kālidāsa's poem of the same name. Suka-Sāri Samvād. Avisārikā.

1900-1911. For the first time Abanindranath met the two Japanese artists, Yokahama Taikwan and Hisida [1901-02 ?]. The Japanese influence changed Abanindranath's technical process altogether. Typical pictures after Japanese influence are : Evening Lamp ; Bhārata Mātā ; Yaksas of the Upper Air ; etc. In 1905 he got his first batch of students. Between 1905 and 1906 he did nearly 16 copies of Mughal drawings, mainly portraits. The direct result is the picture : Head of Dārā. In the Illustrations of Omar Khayyam we see for the first time Abanindranath's work showing a definite individual style. This

series is a landmark in Abanindranath's style. For the first time we see texture, atmosphere, deep interest in portraiture and dramatic expression.

1900-06. Kacha & Devayāni and Rādhā & Krishna [Coll. C]—on slabs, in the fresco technique of Jaipur which the artist never attempted again : the former is akin to earlier work in style. Siva dancing at Gangāvataran [Coll. A]—cartoon for fresco. Of this there exists an enlarged copy by Iswari Prasad and a later version by Nandalal Bose. A Girl with a Lamp [published in *Koka*]. Bhārata Mātā.

ILLUSTRATIONS from Kālidāsa : Yaksas of the Upper Air [Coll. Sir John Woodroffe ; sig. bottom right] ; The Banished Yakṣa—its treatment of the tree, foliage, in particular, was never repeated afterwards. Nirvāṇa—death of Buddha—presented to Hisimato Gaho, the foremost painter of that time and teacher of the pioneer group of modern Japanese painters. Ganesa Janani [1905, Coll. A]—mythological, unique, a class by itself.

Mughal Portait-Drawings [1906, Coll. A ; a few in Coll. Roopkrishna]—nearly 12 enlarged copies in line. Head of Dārā—follows in immediate succession to the above works and bears a marked Mughal influence.

1906-11. OMAR KHAYYAM SERIES—illustrate Fitzgerald's 1st Edition : Verse No. 2 [in 7 versions, the final one in Coll. K, sig. top left] ; Verse No. 7 [sig. top left] ; Verse Nos. 13, 24, 29 [sig. bottom left] ; Verse Nos. 18, 38, 44, 46, 48, 50, 73, 75 [sig. bottom right]. Illustrations of Verse Nos. 2, 24, 29, 38 and 48 are in Coll. K.

Dream of Shahjahan [1910-11, Coll. A. N. Mukherjee]. Sita [Coll. A. Coomaraswamy]—seated figure looking through barred window.

1911-1920. In 1911, after his tour to Puri, a definite change took place in his subjects. In particular, between 1912 and

1916 his figures became heavier and more plastic and he introduced from now on heavy ornaments which were absent before. Also it is worth noticing that in his composition female portraits particularly changed very much. A new type appeared which we do not see before. Though his technical process—wash—is the same as in earlier works, his pictures have taken a heavier and more opaque quality due to free use of white in wash.

1911-15. Queen of Asoka [1911-12, Coll. Queen Mary, England]. A tracing of the same by Bose [Coll. A]. Radha looking at Krishna's Portrait [1911-12, Coll. Lord Carmichael]—lost in shipwreck during the last Great War ; no standard copy exists. Sree-Radha's Kusuma Pratimā or Pushpa Pratimā [Coll. Andrés Karpelès, France].

ACTORS & ACTRESSES of Bengal Stage : Mohesh ; Nārada ; Raja-Chakravarty ; Mantri ; Rati ; Madan ; Prince in Love ; Birendra Keshari as Prisoner : exhibited, in Nov. 1914, along with other pictures at Victoria Albert Museum, London ; this being the first exhibition there of modern Indian art. The above series shows a definite change and belongs to realistic type of work, prominent in characteristics of this period [1911-20].

Tear-drops on Lotus Leaf [Coll. A, sig. top right]—a girl holding a lotus leaf. Enlarged copy by Iswari Prasad [Coll. A]. Fish Girl [Coll. A]—exhibited at London, 1914, as Girl with a Conch. Enlarged copy by Iswari Prasad [Coll. Samarendranath Tagore].

Puri Sea-shore [Coll. Preambada Debi]—landscape. Boy on the Sea-shore [Coll. Bose] and My Garden [Coll. K]—illustrate Tagore's *The Crescent Moon*, 1913.

The End of the Journey [1912-13]—picture of a camel. Portrait of the Artist's Mother [1912-13 ? Coll. A]—done from memory after her death. Enlarged copy by Iswari Prasad [Coll. A].

Kājri or Rain Dance [1912-13]. Enlarged copy by Iswari Prasad. Deva Dāsi or Temple Dancer [1912-13]. Sun Worshipper [1912-13, Coll. K, sig. bottom left]—presented on behalf of the artists of Bengal to Rabindranath Tagore after the Nobel Prize award.

The Deity & the Child [Coll. N. Mukherjee]—presented to his daughter after she lost her child. Love Letter [Coll. J. P. Ganguli]. Rest [Coll. P. N. Mukherjee].

Birth of Tulsi—mythological. Illustration from Chhadanta Jātaka [Coll. O. C. Gangoly]—legend of the six-tusked elephant. Departure of Buddha. Buddha as Mendicant. Victory of Buddha [Coll. S. N. Bhattacharya]. Nirvāna. Preceding 6 pictures first published in *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*, by Sister Nivedita and Ananda Coomaraswamy.

From Puri to Konarak and From Sargadwar to Konarak [Coll. A.]—pictures in ink in sets of 12 and 6 respectively. Puri Scenes [Coll. A]—a set of 5 water colours.

1915-16. ANIMAL LIFE SERIES [Coll. A] : Bird of the Night (vulture) ; White Peacock ; Bulbul ; Deer ; Dawn ; Light in the Shadow ; Call of the Rain ; The Bride ; The Tree ; The Desolate ; The Song of the Evening. All these were exhibited in 1916 by the Indian Society of Oriental Art ; some were also later exhibited in Japan.

'IMPRESSIONS' SERIES : The Sun—a set of 11 water-colours ; The Moon—a set of 6 water-colours ; The Water—a set of 7 water-colours. Treatment, particularly in one set, is very much like that of the western water colour painting.

Chaitanya at Nadia, with signature and seal. Siva-Pārvatī.

The Outcast—a woman in tatters carrying a child on her back.

Riding before the Storm. In the Temple.

1916. PHALGUNI SERIES : Impressions of the stage performance of Rabindranath's drama of the same name [one set in Coll. Manilal Ganguly ; another set in Coll. K] : South Wind— a boy on a swing ; Poet ; Winter ; Last of the Winter ; King's Court & Pandit ; Raja & the Minister.

1917-18. Peeping Morning [Coll. K].

1918. ILLUSTRATIONS of *Gitanjali* : "The pain was great when the strings were being tuned" ; "May be there is one house in the city" [Coll. P. N. Tagore] ; "Is summer's festival only for fresh blossoms and not also for withered leaves and faded flowers ?" [Coll. Capt. Hoskitt Smith] ; "The autumn morning is tired of excess of light" ; "Ever in my life have I sought thee with my songs" [Coll. Mrs. Kesteven] ; "Prisoner, tell me who was it that bound you" ; "The trumpet lies in the dust".

ILLUSTRATIONS of *The Parrot's Training* [Coll. A]—in black and white.

1919-20. LANDSCAPES : DARJEELING SERIES [Coll. A] : The Mist ; The Forest ; Coming of Light ; Coming of Night ; Moon Dance ; Cock Crow ; The Traveller ; The Song of the Cherry Tree ; Om Mani Padme Hum.

Morning ; Evening ; Youth ; Jahangir at Kashmir : these 4 pictures were used as illustrations for V. O. Coner's book on Kashmir. ---

A SET OF DARJEELING LANDSCAPES : The Shooting Star ; The Light of Asia ; The Sun Beam ; On Tiger Hill ; The Himalayas ; River Padma ; Fruit Seller ; Coolie ; Calcutta Road ; Rock & Vulture ; Prayer Flag ; A Fall ; Valley from Kurseong ; Towards the Valley. The first 5 pictures are in Coll. Parul Tagore.

1920-1930 A new period begins in Abanindranath's painting [1920-25]. There is a conscious effort towards the

structural side of composition, not so much of the plastic quality. Portrait has become the main theme in his pictures. The heaviness of the previous period has disappeared altogether. Almost all the pictures of this period are flat in treatment, bright in colouring ; the textural quality has almost vanished.

Between 1927 and 1930 we see Abanindranath purely as a portrait painter. He took fresh start in pastel. For the critic of Abanindranath's style these pastel portraits done between 1927 and 1930 are most valuable.

1920-25. Girija [1921, Coll. P. N. Tagore]. Zeb-ul-Nisa [Coll. A, sig. bottom right]. Basantasena—a dancing girl [Coll. A, sig. bottom right]. Home & the World—a woman before an open door, reading. Alamgir [1922, bought by P. R. Das, who presented it in 1938 to Kala-Bhavana Museum]—largest in size among the artist's works, on mounted cartridge paper. Uma [Parvati with snake, Coll. Bose, with sig. and Ganapati seal]—two copies made by Bose in 1923 and 1941. Malini [Coll. Dr. Pashupati Bhattacharya, sig. bottom right]. Javanese Dancer [Coll. A, sig. top right in Devnagri]. Hiuen Sung. The Broken Flute [Coll. Lord Reading, sig. and seal near centre]. Gandhi, Andrews & Tagore [Coll. K, sig. and seal right side]—large oblong size. The Peacock [Coll. Aswini Roy, sig. and seal left]. Visva-Karma [Coll. A. K. Haldar]—the picture is of an ivory image. ~ Gandhi in Prison [Coll. Roopkrishna, sig. and seal right corner]—seated figure. The Mango Blossom. Boy Actor [Sig. and Ganapati seal top right]—a portrait. Prince of the Fairy Land [Coll. Sunayani Devi]. Nurjahan [Sig. bottom right]. Abagunthita (The Veiled Lady). The Hunter [1922, Coll. Basanti Devi]. Daughter of the Soil or Black Girl [Coll. Jamuna Sen]. Inside the Tent [1922, Alamgir (?) seated inside the tent, beads in hand, before a burning candle]. Taj Bibi [Lady with hubble-bubble, Coll. A]—on cloth. Jahangir—in his garden,—done on cloth. Queen [Coll. K]—on cloth.

PLAYMATE SERIES [1925] : The Bear & the Dog ; The Cat ; The Deer ; The Monkey & the Goat. At this time the artist did another series of bird and animal pictures, 19 in all : Fox in search of the Lost Bone : Black Water ; Owl ; Frog ; Pigeon ; Dove ; Sword Fish ; Film Struck ; Bulbul ; Rabbit ; Parrot ; Woodpecker ; Bird of the Night ; Kite ; Begum Khete Shiyal ; Monkey Player ; Rata Shiyal ; Hardwari Baba.

1925-30. Kumari [Coll. A]. Toilet Scene. Mid Winter [1924-25, Coll. Gouri Devi, sig. and seal bottom right] —a portrait. Uttara & Arjuna [Coll. Durga Sankar Bhattacharya]. Pilgrim [Hiuen Sung ?—a Tibetan figure on a mountain path]. Queen of the Forest—a Bhutia girl with a basket of provisions on her back.

ILLUSTRATIONS of *Natir Puja* [Coll. A, a set of 9 pastel pictures ; impressions of the performance of the drama]. Girl with a White Feather [Coll. Manindra Bhushan Gupta].

BENGAL LANDSCAPES [1926-27, Coll. A] : Ullapara Station ; Ullapara Bridge ; Ullapara Canal ; River Karatoa—in Dist. Rangpur ; Hura-sagar ; Tal Gachir Hat ; Goalpara ; The State Horse ; Darga of Makhdum Saheb.

MASK DRAWINGS from *Tapati* [1929].

1930. Abanindranath started his Arabian Nights Series which marks the final stage of his creative life. Since his acquaintance with Japanese artists the decorative quality in his pictures became unimportant. In the Arabian Nights Series we see a deliberate attempt to regain that decorative quality. And here his success is such as he never attained before.

1930. ARABIAN NIGHTS SERIES [Coll. A] : The Prologue ; The Story of Three Old Men ; Fishermen & Jinn ; Sindbad the Sailor ; Three Apples ; Marriage of Nuruddin ;

Prince of Iran & his Lover ; Story of Nuruddin & his Slave Girl ; Story of Sea-king's Daughter ; Story of Fatemah ; Story of Nine Idols ; Prince Khudadal ; Alladin and his Wonder Lamp ; Alibaba & Forty Thieves ; Story of the Rope-man, the Blind-man & the Horse-man ; Greek King & the Physician (Head of the Physician Doban).

The above pictures of the series were exhibited ; but not the following :—

In the Harem ; The Story of the Cock & the Merchant ; The Crystal Coffin ; The Lady of the Rings ; The First Old Man's Tale ; The Decapitation of the Bride ; The Four Fishes ; Looking into the Harem ; Story of the Merchant and the Jinn ; Wazir & Shaharzadi ; Shaharzadi led into the Bridal Chamber ; Shaharzadi telling the Story ; The Story of the Merchant who understood Animal Languages ; The Merchant & Four Travelers ; The Magic Carpet ; Story of the Three Sisters ; The Princess of China ; Abu Hossain ; The Story of the Bronze Horse ; Samsul Nehar the Slave-girl ; Fisherman & the Jinn ; Prince Kamar-ul-Zaman ; Story of Shahazada Khudadal & the Princess of the Ocean ; Finding of the Ninth Doll ; Three Sisters of Bagdad & Three Dervishes ; Harun-ul-Rashid & the Camel-man telling the Story ; Hunch-back & the Fish-bone ; Persian Prince & his Sweetheart ; Ganim & Lady Totma, the Slave of Caliph : 45 pictures in all according to the list supplied by Sj. Mohanlal Ganguly.

The Latest Phase of Abanindranath's Creative Activity.

1938-42. After completing the Arabian Nights Series (upto 1930), Abanindranath has not done any important painting. He ceased to paint and rather spent his time in writing *jātrās* (folk dramas). He took his theme from Ramayana and other Puranic stories of popular version (Bat-talā Edition). In a letter, dated 1935, he says that as his painting activity had stopped it seemed that his flow of literary activity also was coming to a standstill.

Between 1938 and 1939 he got fresh inspiration to paint a series of *Pat* paintings and he worked for about four months and produced nearly 80 pictures. These pictures are in no way continuation of his previous work ; they are rather care-free work, though not careless work. It is the only series where the artist has painted in a most unconventional way. He has used water colour, pastel, charcoal and chinese ink. The pictures are pronouncedly realistic in character. The artist has never before in all his previous work used black colour so abundantly as in these pictures.

1938-39. KAVIKANKAN CHANDI SERIES : Dev-devir Bandana (Prayer to Gods and Goddesses) ; Abhaya in the Cottage of Dharmaketu ; Another of the same title ; Ganeshar Bandana (Prayer to Ganesha) ; Same title ; Chandir Bandana ; Shiva Bandana ; Chaitanya Bandana ; Lion ; Elephant ; The Chamari Cow ; Bear ; Porcupine ; Buffalo ; The Talk of the Jackal & the Crow ; The Goat of the Mountain ; Monkey & the Tree ; Raibagh (Tiger King ?) ; Rhinoceros ; The Hind ; Kalketu ; Defeat of the Lion ; The Death of Raibagh ; An Elephant whose Tail was Cut ; The Boar ; Monkey eating Bananas ; Swarna-Godhika ; Kalketu & Swarna-Godhika ; Returning from Market (Bear and Phullara) ; Abhaya in the Home of Kalbyadh ; Complaint to Durga by Tigress, Lioness, Hind & Elephant ; Kalbyadh digging up Gold ; Devi returning with Her Vessel ; Dalubadh in the garb of King : 33 pictures according to the list supplied by Sj. Mohanlal Ganguly.

KRISHNA MONGAL SERIES : The Slaughter of Kagasur ; Krishna ; Balaram ; Nanichuri (Krishna's Cousin Brother) ; Keshi-badh (Killing of Keshi) ; Kansa-nisoodan (Destroyer of Kansa) ; Mustic Badh (Murder of Mustic) ; Krishna beautifying Kubja ; Kubalaya-Peedh-Badh (Killing of the two elephants, Kubalaya & Peedh) ; Birth of Krishna (Janmā-shtami) ; Murder of Kansa ; Kaliya-daman (Punishing the Kaliya

Serpent) ; Balaram killing Brishasur ; The Slaughter of Bakasur ; The Slaughter of Trinavarta ; The Murder of Batsasur ; Hamaka (Dyer's house) ; Aghasur (Devil of the Mountain) ; The christening of Krishna ; The Slaughter of Pootana ; The Doll of Ram : 21 pictures, according to the list, supplied by Sj. Mohanlal Ganguly.

1940. Abanindranath makes toys from odd, picked-up materials. Even before 1940 the artist had started making toys. It is an extreme type of fanciful work. The artist's attraction for texture finds fullest scope in this work which is an abstract arrangement of different textures of different materials. In these toys the artist has not tried to create forms but by arranging different textures in an abstract way, some form is obtained.

1941. The Last Journey [in 2 versions, one in Coll. K, sig. bottom right]—impression of Rabindranath's funeral procession.

1942. FRESCO PAINTINGS : on the walls of Gupta Nibas, Barahnagore, near Calcutta ; mostly sketchy.

PICTURES and DRAWINGS *not identified* : Transformation of Radhanath (Abanindranath's servant)—a set 14 pictures ; Garden to Let ; Misty Morning ; Indian Sufi ; Baba Nanak's Singer ; Last of Birendranath Tagore (caricature) ; Massori (landscape) ; Karuna (daughter's portrait) and Mōha-mudgar—a set of 11 pictures [all above in Coll. A] ; also, Parody of Ideal [a set in Coll. Mani Ganguly].

PICTURES DONE IN COLLABORATION WITH OR CORRECTED
BY ABANINDRANATH

Mukul Dey's "Watering the Tulsi Plant" and "Eclipse" ; Pratima Tagore's "Vaishnavi" [a woman playing on cymbals, Coll. K] ; and "Boat" ; Nandalal Bose's enlarged copy, in colour,

of "Kōl Dance", originally a lithograph ; and "The Peacock" which was changed and modified to such an extent that it is more the master's work than the pupil's.]

REFERENCE TO COLLECTIONS

Excepting the Artist's personal collection or that of a few of his relatives and the collection in the Kala-Bhavana Museum, Santiniketan, no other private or public gallery possesses a good, representative number of Abanindranath's pictures. The following public museums and private houses contain some of his pictures :

Lahore Museum ; Bangalore Museum ; P. N. Tagore (Calcutta) ; Mukul Ch. Dey (Calcutta) ; Sailendranath Dey (Jaipur) ; O. C. Gangoly (Calcutta) ; Dinesh Sen (Calcutta) ; Sir J. C. Bose (Calcutta) ; J. P. Ganguli (Calcutta) ; Roopkrishna (Lahore) ; Samarendranath Gupta (Lahore) ; Asit K. Haldar (Lucknow) ; Vishnupada Roy Chowdhury (Howrah).

ABANINDRANATH'S PAINTINGS

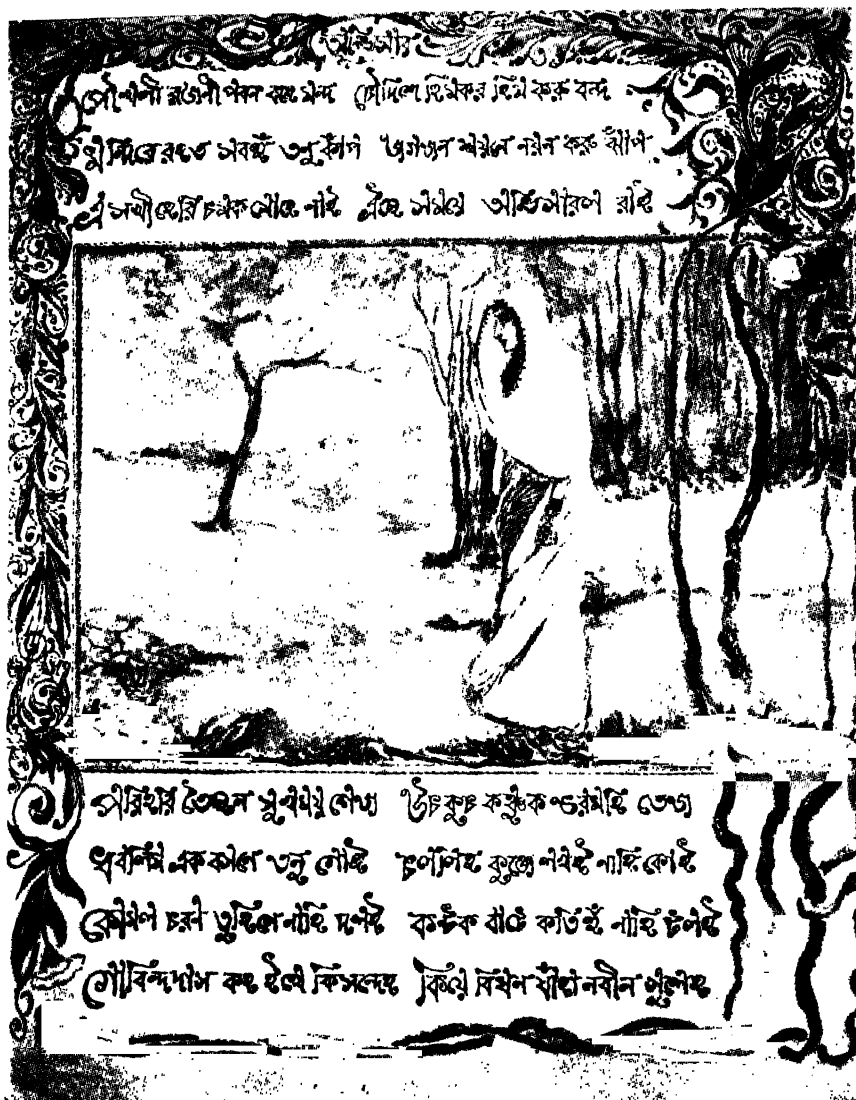
As reproduced serially in the present volume.

1. AVISAR : Illustration of a poem by Chandidās. Abanindranath's first attempt at Indian Painting. 1895.
2. Water-colour Sketches : Examples of the artist's earliest experiments. 1881 (?)
3. An ink-and-brush sketch : From a post card sent to Mr. Mukul Dey. 1915.
4. Portrait in Pastel : Maharshi Devendranath Tagore. 1894.
5. Portrait in Pastel : Rabindranath Tagore. 1894.
6. Pen-and-ink Sketch : Maharshi Devendranath Tagore addressing a gathering. 1891—1894.
7. Pen-and-ink Sketch : Rabindranath Tagore at Shahibag, Ahmedabad. 1891—1894.
- 8 & 9. Pen-and-ink Sketches : 1891—1894.
10. KACHA AND DEVAYANI : Pencil drawing for the fresco in No. 14. 1900—1902.
11. THE MUSICIANS. 1899 (?)
12. SELF-PORTRAIT. 1928.
13. Portrait in Pastel : Jagadananda Roy. 1926—1930.
14. KACHA AND DEVAYANI : Fresco painting in Jaipur Style. 1900—1902.
15. BIRTH OF KRISHNA. 1895—1897.
16. Illustration of *Ritu Sambar* by Kalidasa. 1897—1900.
17. Illustration of *Omar Khayyam*. 1908—1910.
18. BUDDHA AND SUJATA. 1897—1900.
19. BANISHED YAKSHA : Illustration of Kalidasa's *Meghaduta*. 1900—1905.
20. BHARATA MATA. 1903—1904.
21. Portrait in Pastel : Dwijendranath Tagore. 1904.
22. GANESA JANANI. 1905.
23. ILLUSTRATION OF *Omar Khayyam*. 1906—1908.
24. DREAM OF SHAHJAHAN. 1910—1911.

25. TISSARAKSHITA (QUEEN OF ASOKA) AND THE BODHI TREE. 1911—1912.
26. RADHA LOOKING AT KRISHNA'S PORTRAIT. 1911—1912.
27. RADHA BY THE RIVER JAMUNA. 1912—1915.
28. TEAR DROPS ON LOTUS LEAF. 1912—1913.
29. Portrait (pencil drawing) : W. W. Pearson. 1916.
30. BAUL : Artist's impression of Rabindranath in *Phālguni*. 1916 (?)
31. KAJRI (Rain-dance). 1912—1913.
32. THE END OF THE JOURNEY. 1912—1913.
33. CHILD ON THE SEASHORE : Illustration of *The Crescent Moon*.¹ 1913.
34. WHITE PEACOCK. 1915—1916.
35. UMA. 1921.
36. HIJEN SUNG. 1921—1922.
37. OLD OLD TOYS. 1922.
38. PEACOCK. 1922—1923.
39. KATHAK. 1923—1924.
40. Mother and Child. 1923—1924 (?)
41. CHAITANYA WITH HIS DISCIPLES. 1925 (?)
42. DEER : Also known as *Swadhinatār Swapna* (Dream of Freedom). 1925.
43. MONKEY AND THE GOAT. 1925.
44. Portrait : C. F. Andrews. 1925.
45. QUEEN OF THE FOREST. 1926—1927.
46. Portrait in Pastel : Jamuna Devi. 1926.
47. Detail from a Ranchi landscape.
48. RAJA VIKRAMA : Artist's impression of Rabindranath in *Tapati*. 1929.
49. ILLUSTRATION OF KAVIKANKAN CHANDI.² 1938—1939.
50. THE LAST JOURNEY. Artist's impression of the funeral procession of Rabindranath Tagore. 7th August, 1941.

¹ In *The Crescent Moon* the picture is wrongly ascribed to Nandalal Bose.—*Ed.*

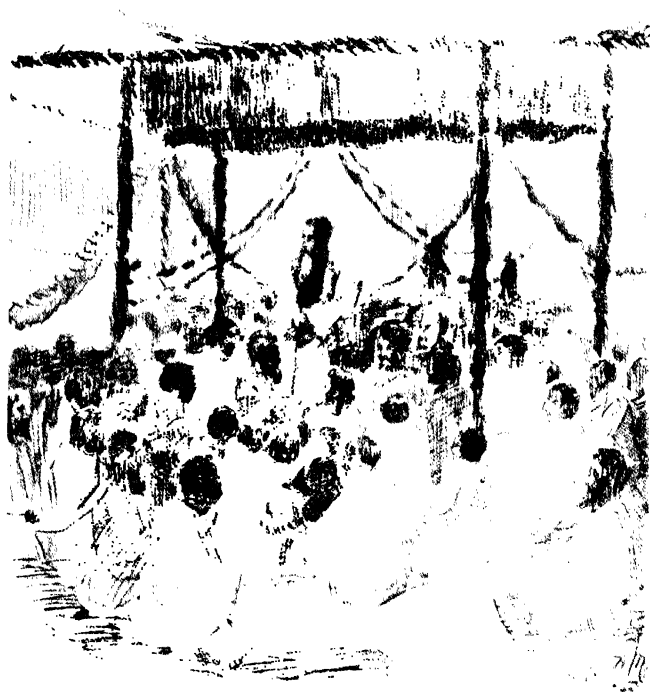
² Blocks kindly lent by *The Hindusthan Standard*.

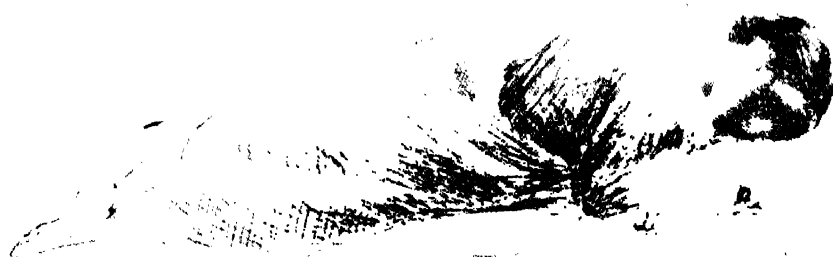








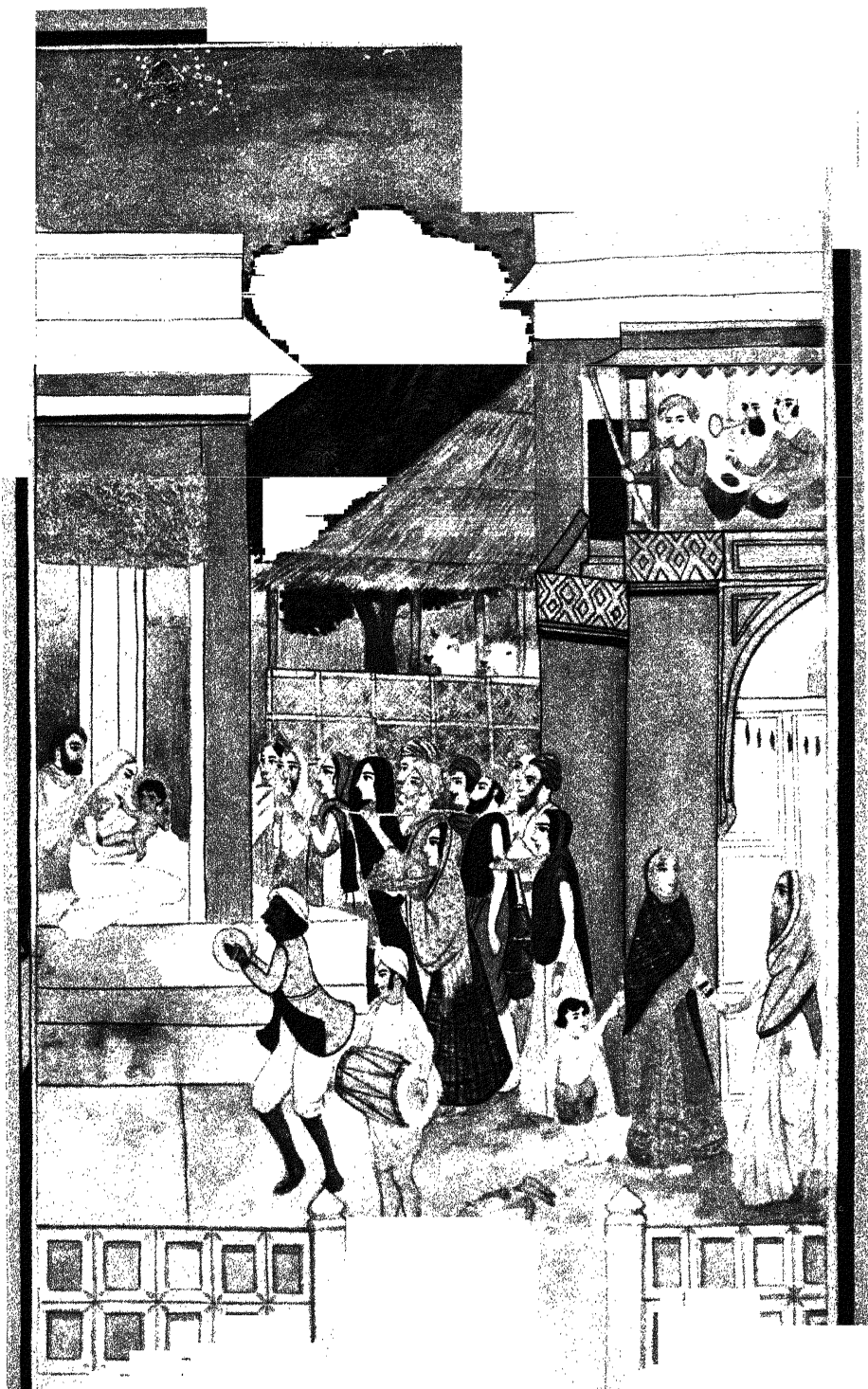


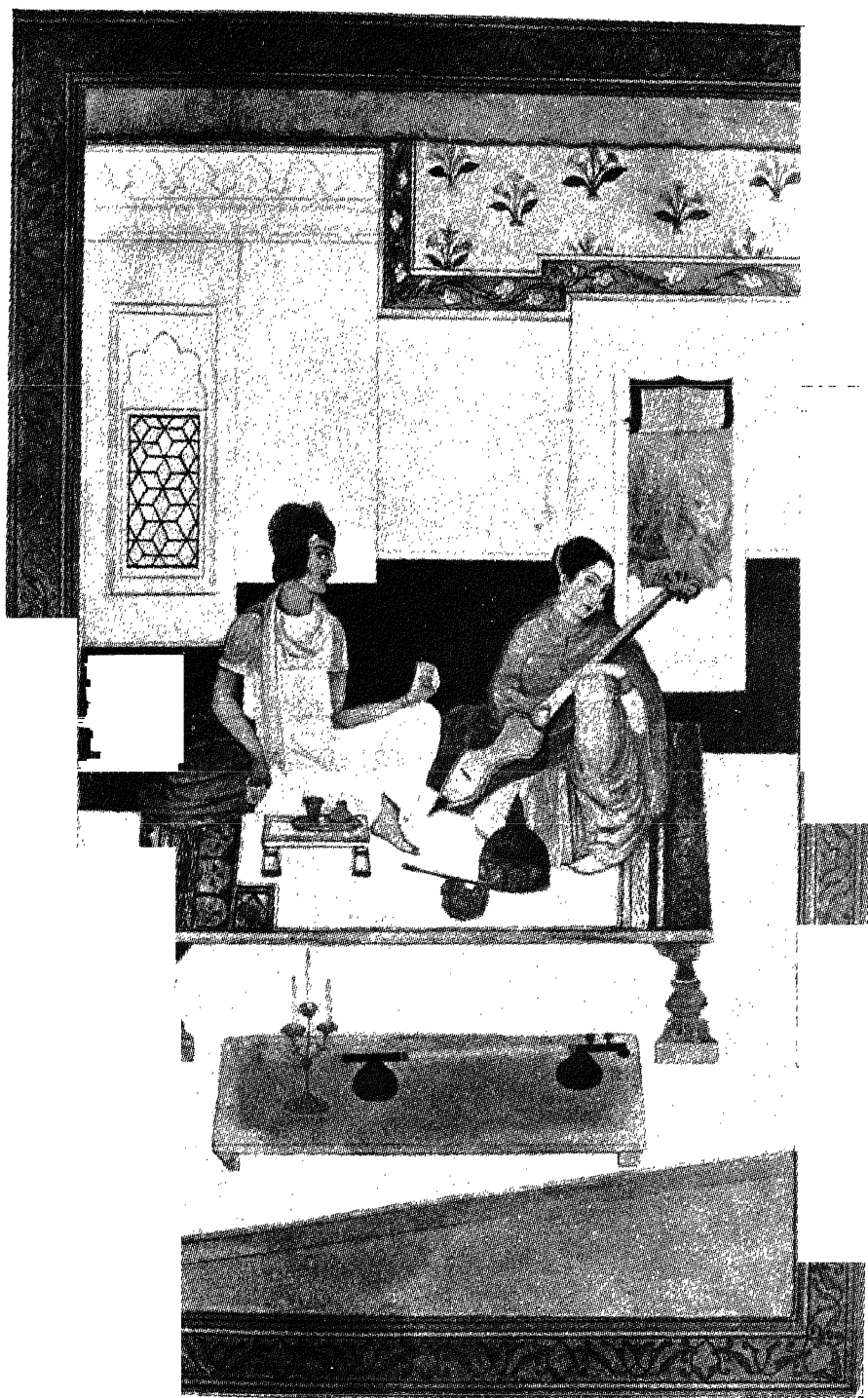






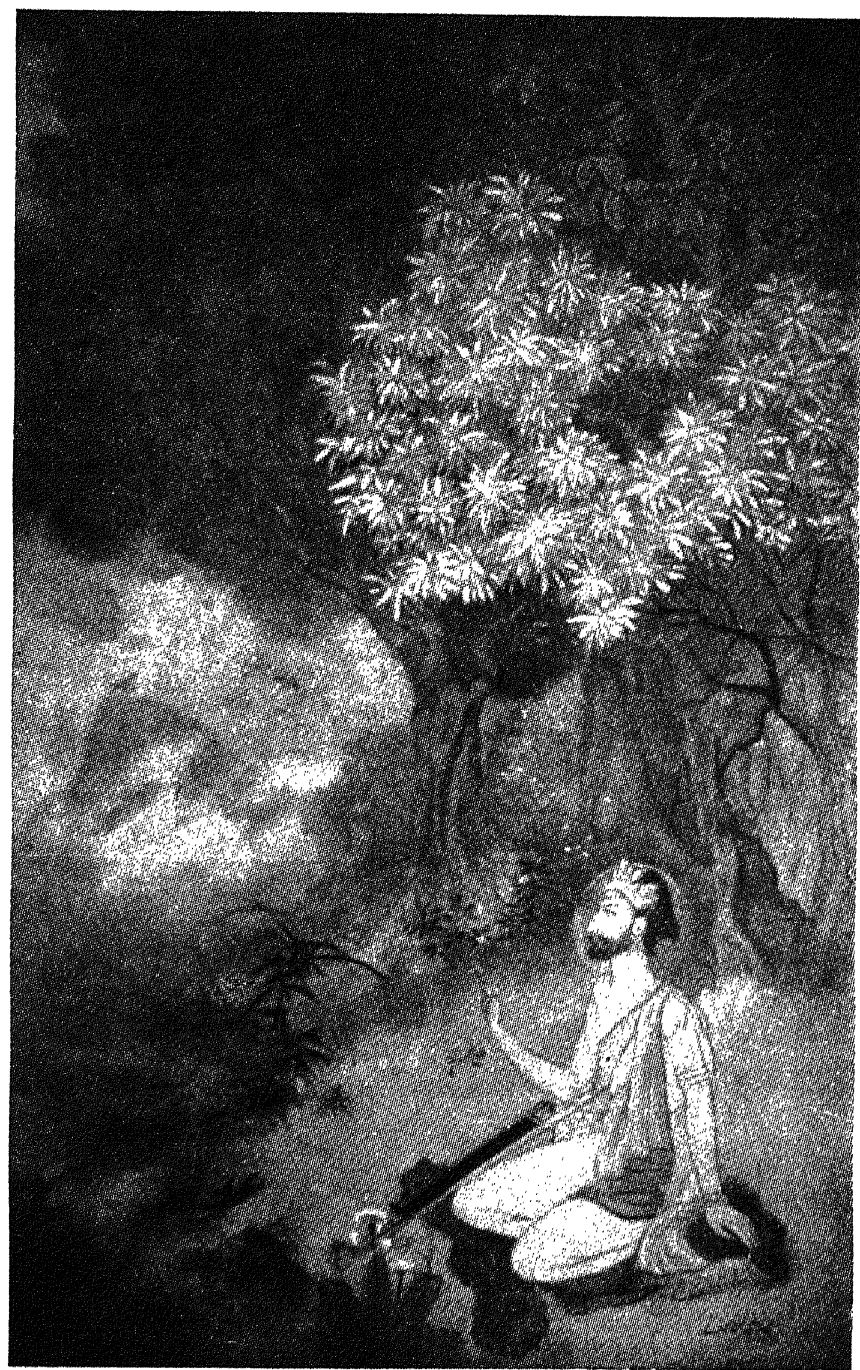




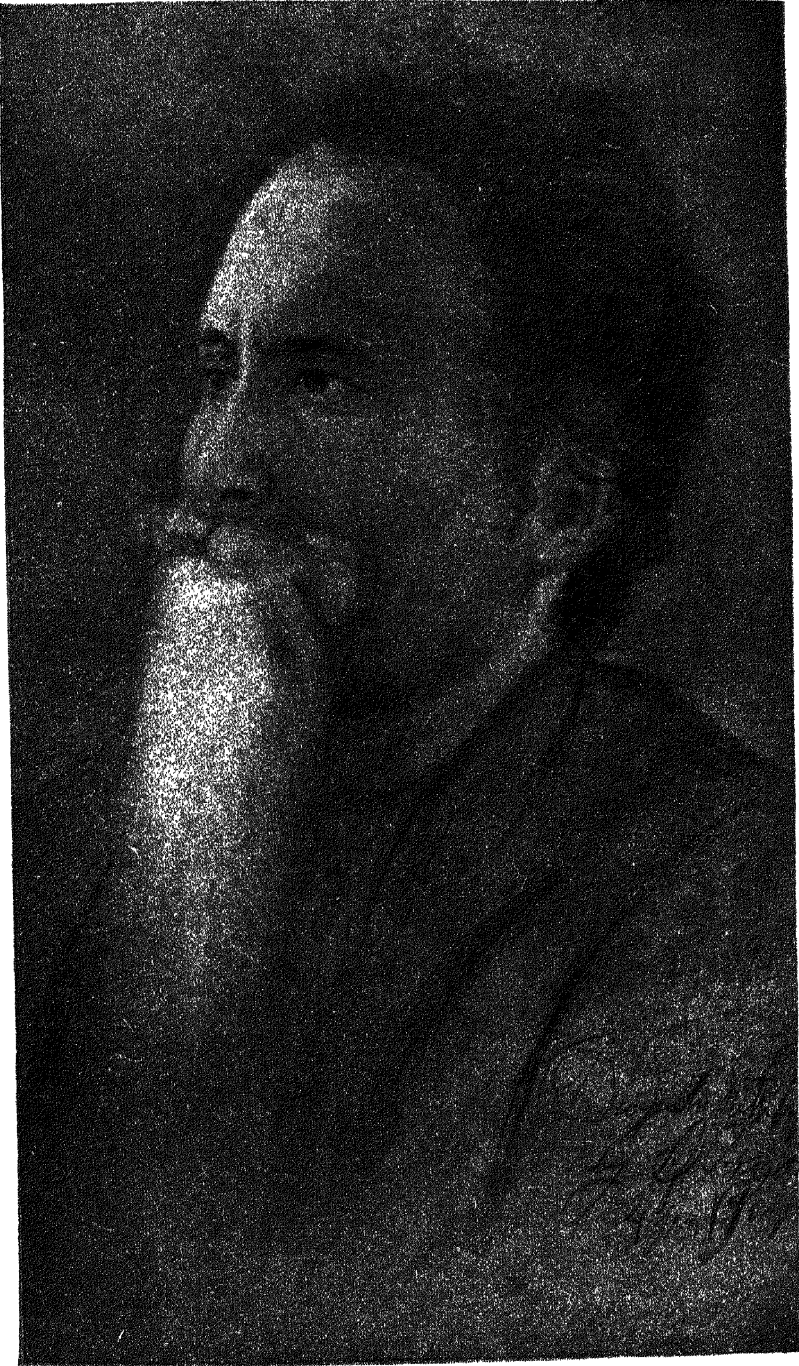


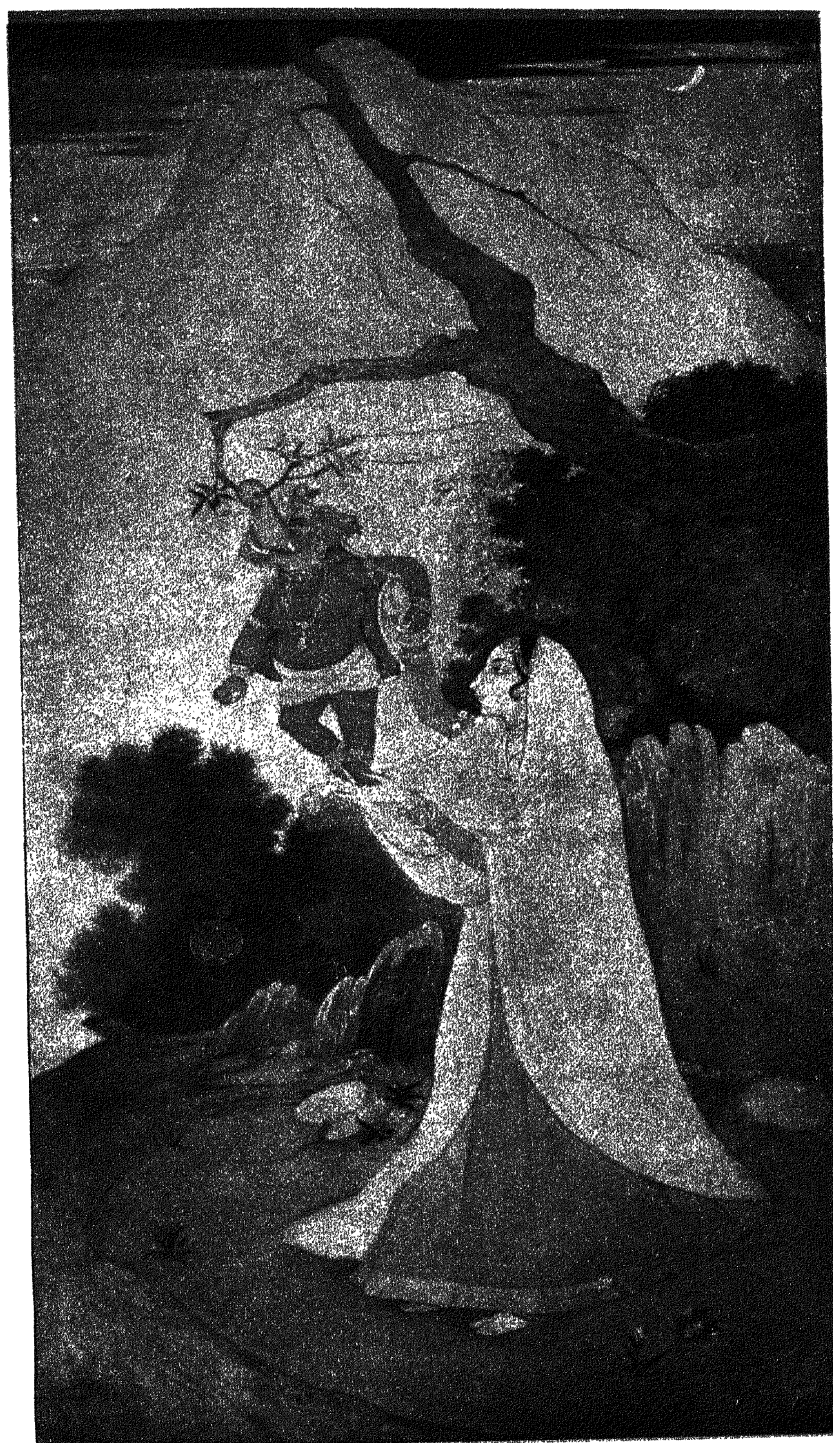


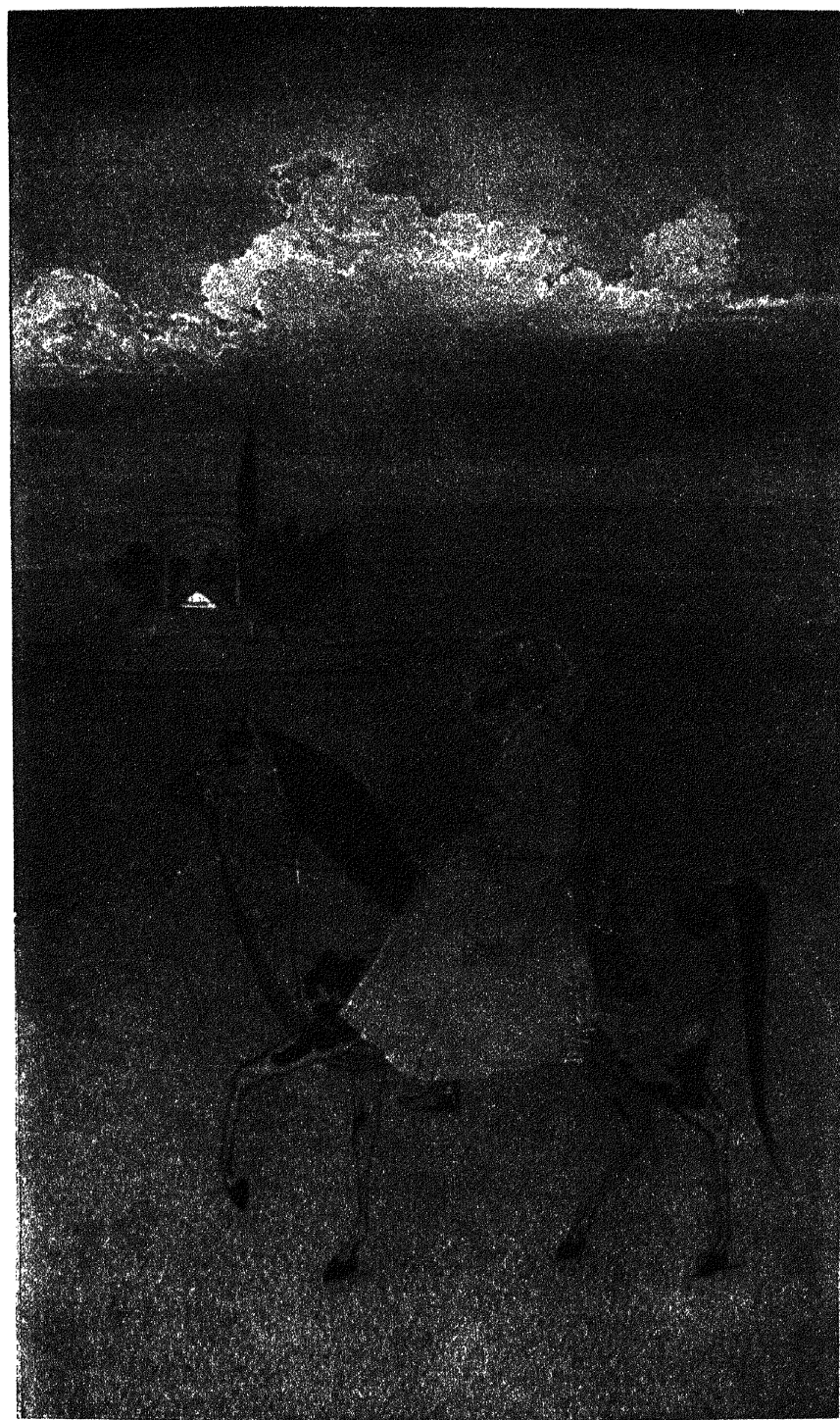










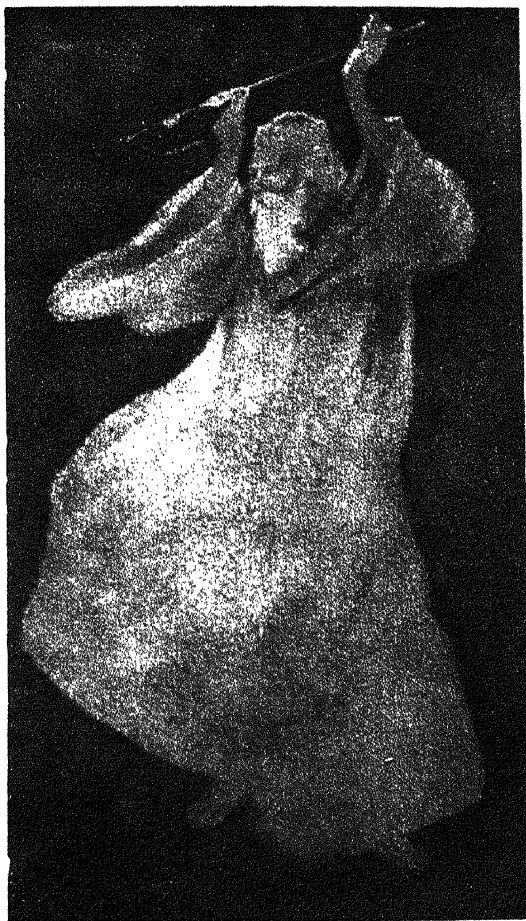




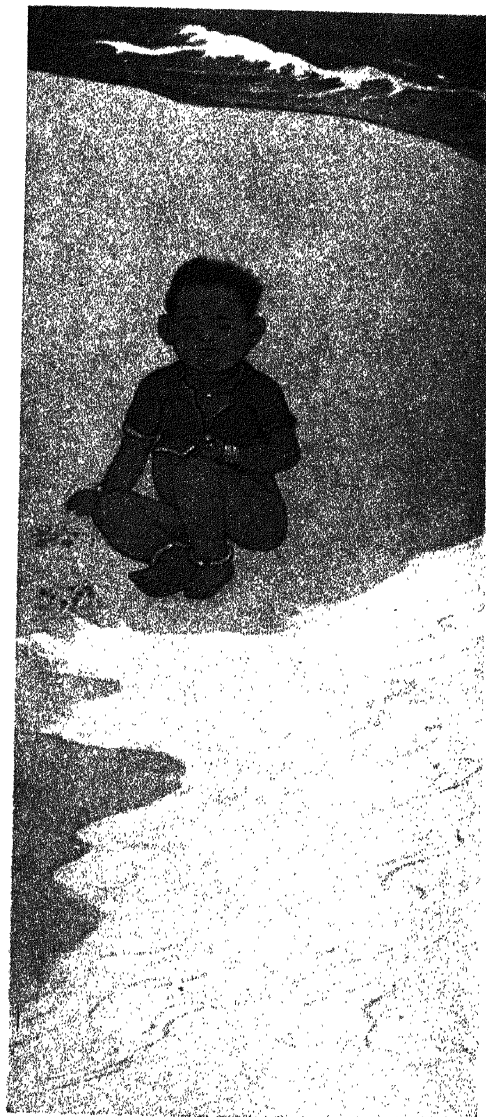




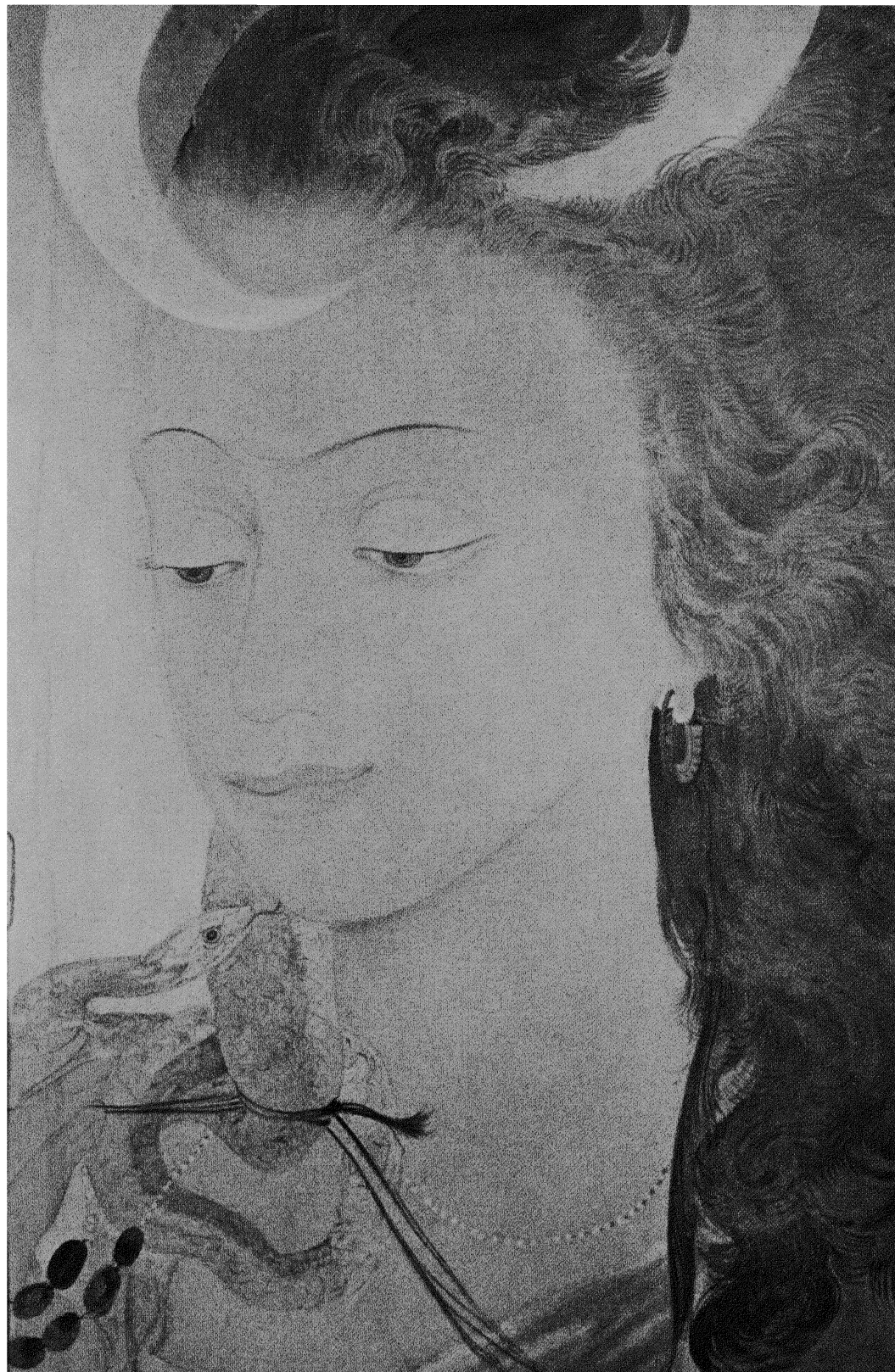


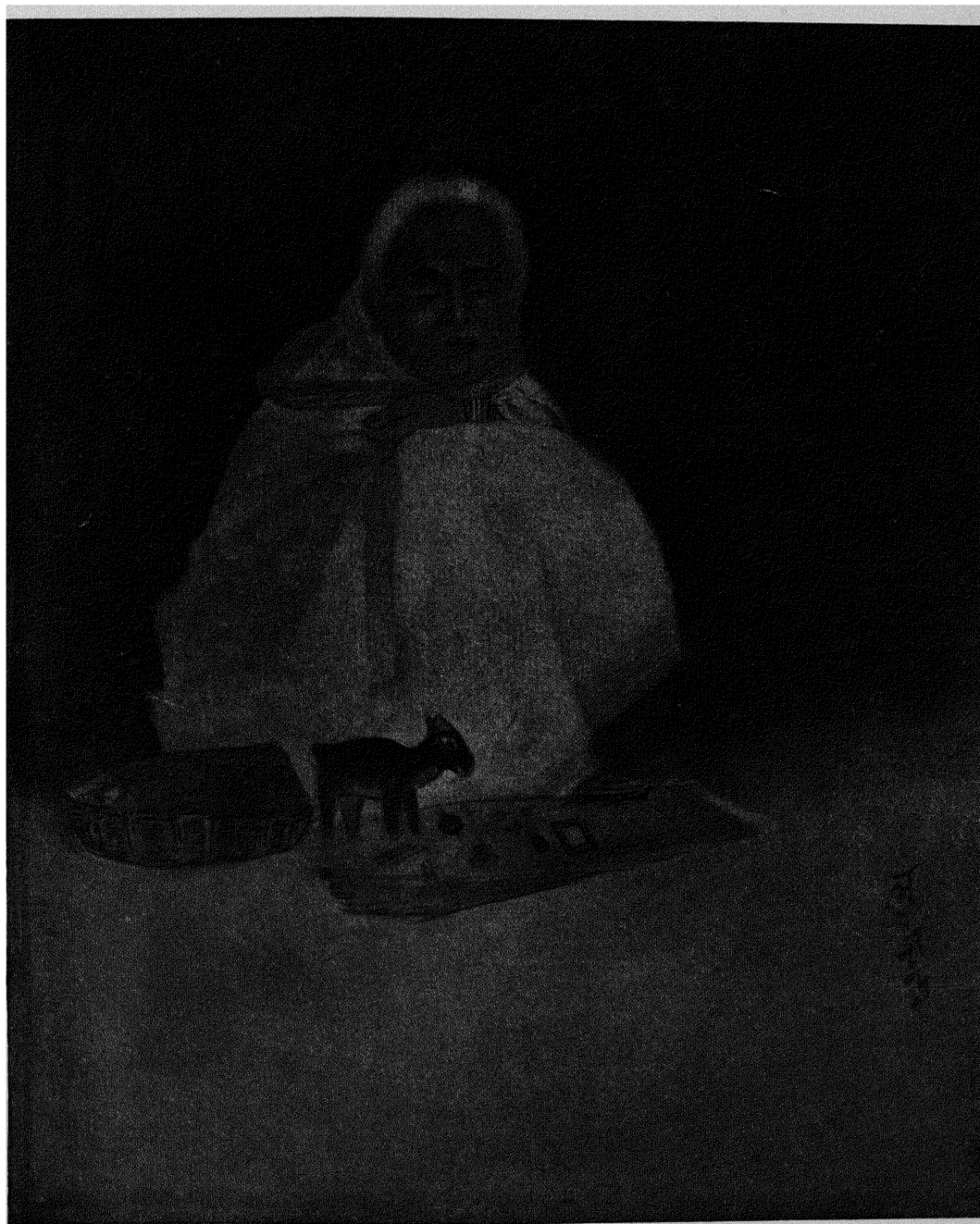


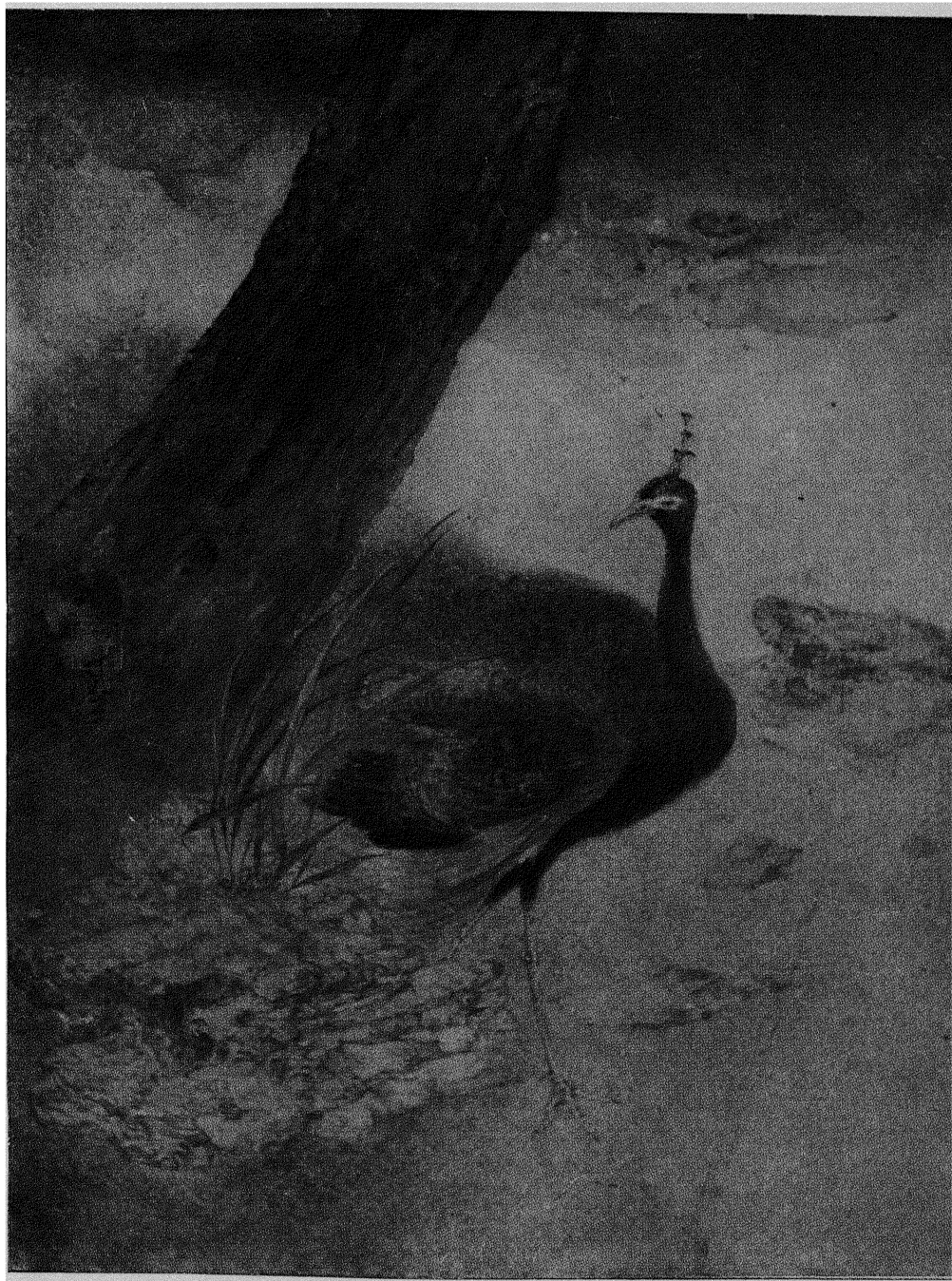








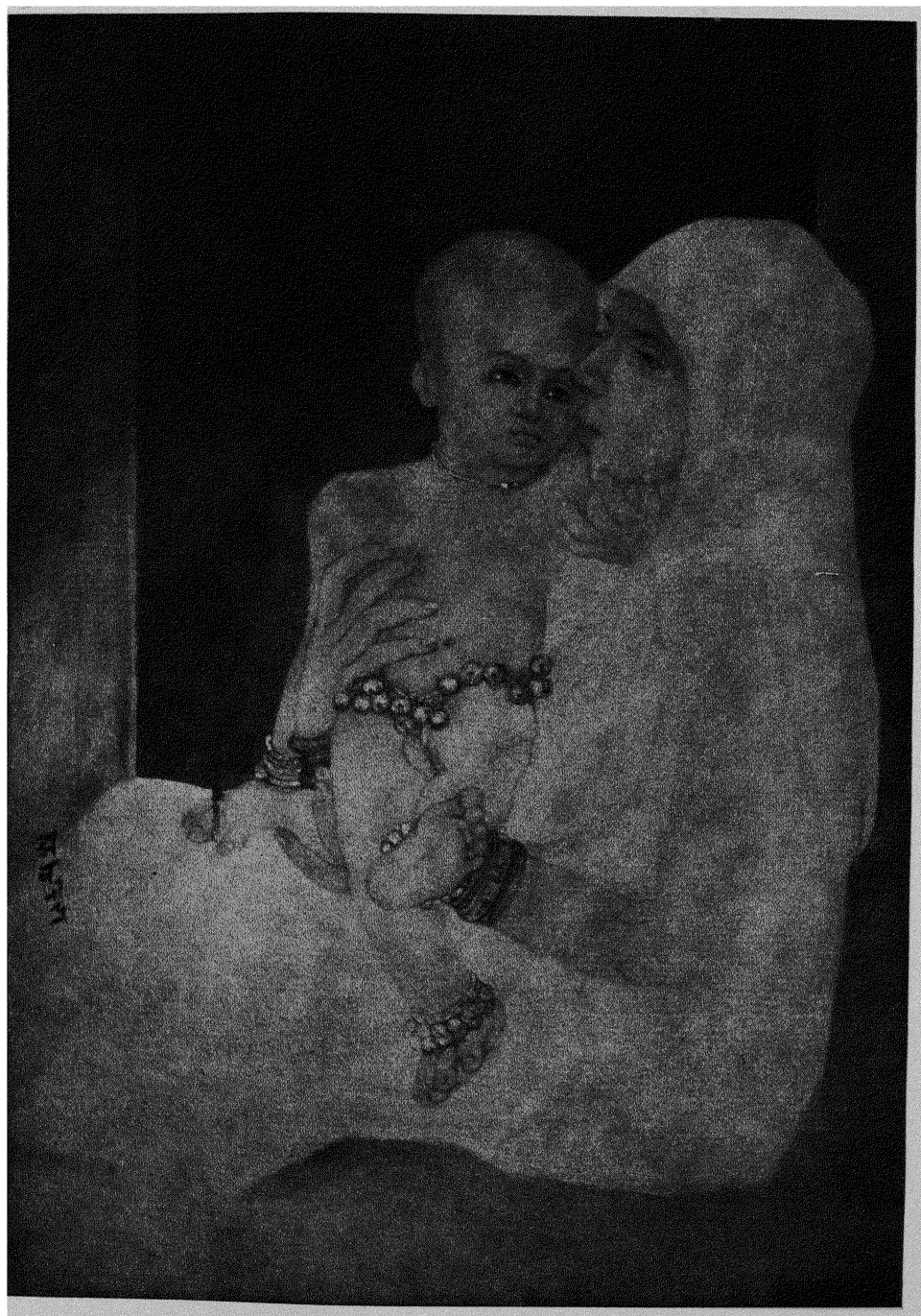




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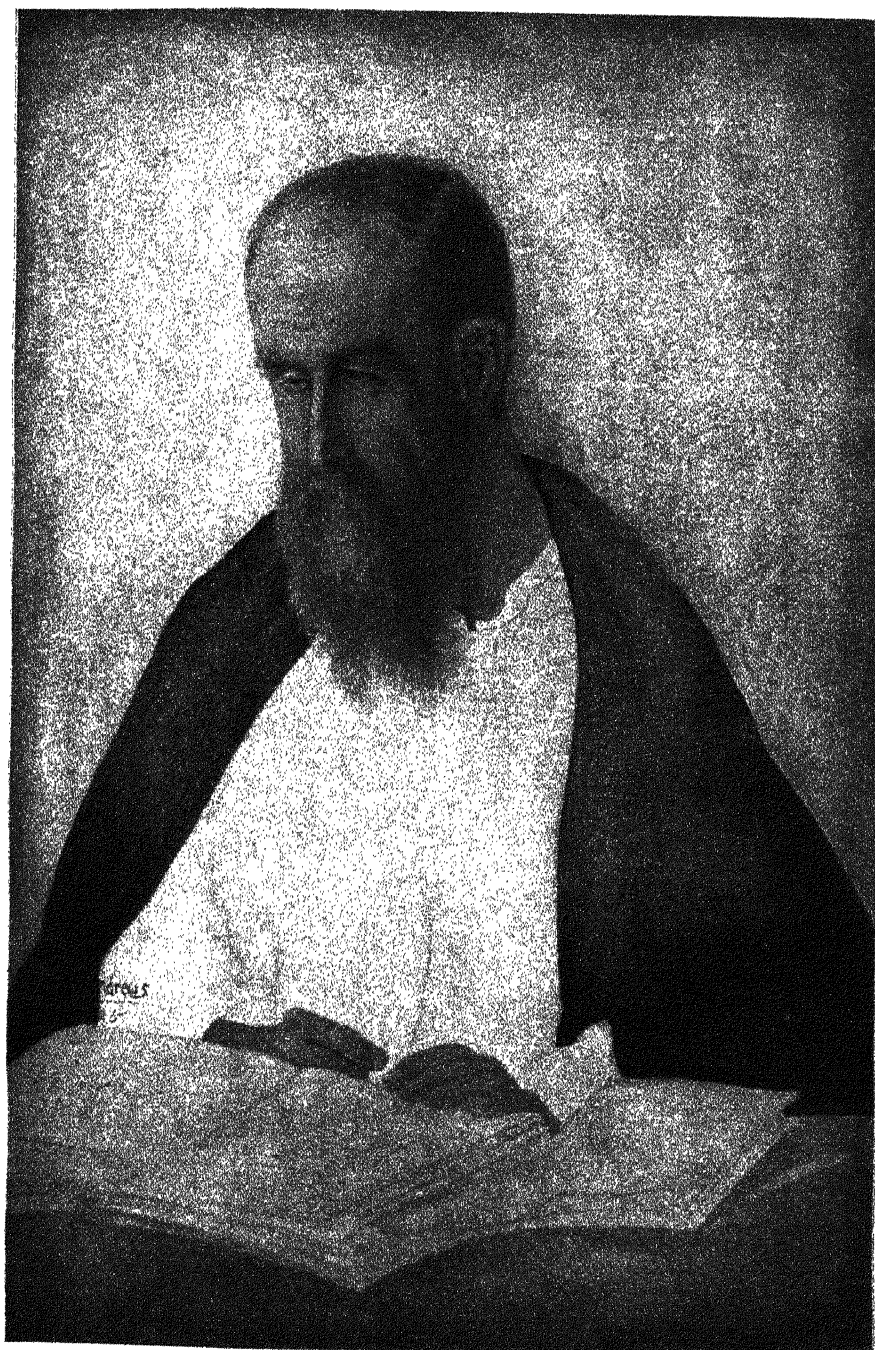








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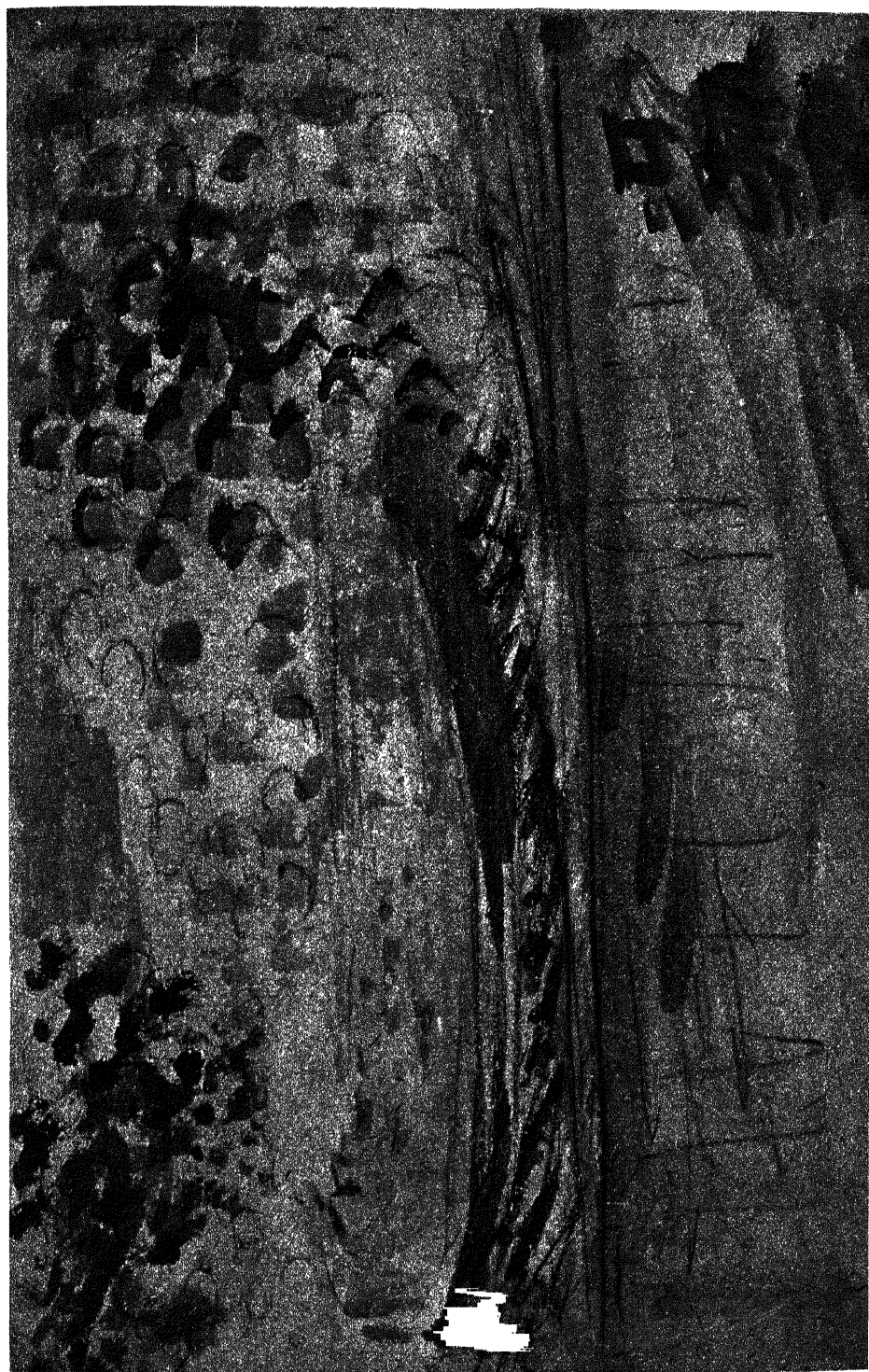




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SONAR BANGLA*

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

My *Sonār Bānglā*, I love you.
Ever your skies, your breeze
 play the flute in my heart.
In *Fālgun*,¹ in your mango-grove
 the perfume makes me wild with joy,
 ah, me :
in *Agbran*,² in your fields full of grain
 what sweet smile have I seen.

What beauty, what shade, what tenderness, what enchantment,
 with your *anchal*³ have you spread
 at the root of the banyan tree,
 and at the shores of your rivers.
Your voice is like bliss to my ears,
 ah me,
When your face is pale with sadness,
 my eyes fill with tears.

* *Sonār Bānglā* : literally, "Golden Bengal". The word *Sonār* has acquired delicate associations of love and of beauty and of adoration in the Bengali language and is untranslatable. The expression *Sonār Bānglā* is current all over the province, and is symbolic of the devotion that Bengalis feel for their homeland.

This poem, cast in the traditional form of Bengali folk songs, indulges in the simple and sentimental repetition of the word "mother" which abounds, more particularly, in patriotic lyrics. In this translation by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty, which aims at an exact rendering, the evocative word has not always been used ; the refrain at the end of each stanza, which is the same as the first line of the poem, has been omitted. This exquisite patriotic song, sung in every Bengali home, cannot be taken by itself apart from the tune, which is also the poet's own variation of a mode of traditional Bengali folk-songs.

1. Name of a month in Spring.
2. Name of a month in Autumn.
3. The hem of a *Saree*.

In this playground of yours, mother,
 my childhood have I passed ;
my life, I know, is blessed
 by your dust on my limbs.
At day's end, in the evening
 when you light the lamp,
 ah me,
Leaving all my play
 I come running to you, my mother.

In your fields where cattles graze
 and at your ferry-ghat for crossing over to the other shore,
all day, in your shadow-covered village lanes where birds sing,
 in your court-yard filled with grain,
 my days they pass away.
 ah, me ;
They are my brothers all, your shepherds and your peasants.

At your feet, mother, I make obeisance,
 the sacred dust will be the crown of my head.
Whatever wealth I have in my poverty
 I shall lay before you ;
 ah me ;
Never shall I again buy from the outsider
 the fatal noose
 as garland for my neck.

RABINDRANATH ON THE FINITE AND THE INFINITE*

By BENOY GOPAL RAY

LIKE many other philosophers, Rabindranath in and through his numerous writings has only aimed at the clarification of a single issue in the shape of the relation between the finite and the Infinite. This baffling problem has been the query of eternity and all through the ages seers have been attempting at answers. In the *Jīvan Smṛiti** the poet writes : “Meseems, there is only one grand tune of all my compositions and it may conveniently be styled as the union of the Infinite with the finite in finiteness.” This tune starts as early as the play, *Prakṛitir Pratiśodh*² written in 1884. In the drama, an ascetic renounces the world in the hope of attaining salvation. Suddenly a little girl catches him in the snares of affection. The ascetic realises that salvation is not in renunciation but in bondage. Deliverance can be achieved in and through the worldly ties. This idea has been the keynote of Rabindra-philosophy and it branches off into many a side-issue. All through our discussion, we shall have occasion to see how deftly these issues peep out through his various discourses and lyrics.

Two distinct streams of thought flow down when we tap Rabindra-lore for the relation of the Absolute with the finite individual. As a Vedāntin of the Sāṃkara School, he extols the Absolute and the Absolute alone, disregarding the claims of the

* We are glad to publish this chapter from the author's forthcoming book on the Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore. The author is Adhyapaka of Philosophy in Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan.—Ed.

1. *Jīvan-Smṛiti*, p. 249 (1st Ed.)

† Passages marked with this sign are my own rendering.

2. See *Sacrifice and other Plays*, where it has been translated as “The Ascetic.”

finite individuals. Again as a Vedāntin of the Rāmānuja School and even more as a follower of the Bhakti cult or Vaiṣṇavism, he tries to weave a firm organic relation between the Absolute and the finites. The fact that he extols the Absolute at the cost of the finites should not lead us to suppose that he deems the entire world-process as māyā. Nowhere in his writings is this conception welcome. On the other hand, wherever occasion has arisen, Rabindranath has vehemently protested against the concept of māyā. He writes : "Coming to the theatre of life we foolishly sit with our back to the stage. We see the gilded pillars and decorations, we watch the coming and going of the crowd ; and when the light is put out at the end, we ask ourselves in bewilderment, what is the meaning of it all ? If we paid attention to the inner stage, we could witness the eternal love-drama of the soul and be assured that it has pauses, but no end ; and that the gorgeous world-preparations are not a magnificent delirium of things."¹ In the second volume of *Śāntiniketan* the poet raises the query : Has māyā compelled Brahman to express Himself ? While answering, he emphatically denies any such possibility. He says : there is no māyā. His manifestation is in ānandam or bliss and bliss is His only manifestation.²

The moot question that arises in this connection is : What then is the real teaching of Rabindranath ? Most critics have painted him as a concrete idealist, a Vedāntin of the Rāmānuja School, a follower of Vaiṣṇavism. But how to reconcile the absolutistic teachings of the poet with the cult of the Deity and the devotee ? The poet himself has suggested that he believes in an organic relation of the Absolute and the finites. He considers *Prakṛitir Pratiśodh* to be the first real embodiment of his philosophy and, later on, in the conception of Jīvan-Devatā, even the slightest tinge of absolutistic idealism is effaced. His philosophy may be more likened to that of Hegel. But the absolute idealism which

Thoughts from Tagore, p. 29.

See *Śāntiniketan*, Vol. II, p. 889.

he preaches may be conveniently compared to that of Sāṃkara or Bradley. There are some who opine that whenever Rabindranath explains the Upaniṣads, he writes in the vein of absolutism, while in fact he believes in concrete idealism. But this theory is not founded on sufficient logic, for the Upaniṣads may be explained in both ways. There is no denying the fact that at certain moments the poet's mind has been seized by the supreme glory of the Absolute. Actuated by such feelings, he degrades the finites of the world to the rank of mere elements whose only mission is to be lost in the Absolute. Nowhere in his writings do we come across a reconciliation of these diverse views. It is true that Rabindranath believes in the concrete form of idealism but nowhere has he adduced a reasoned account of his repudiation of the absolute form. Can it be suggested that he cannot decide between the two? In any case, when the poet has shown his liking for the concrete variety, henceforward, in our discussions, we shall take him as a believer in concrete idealism. In this chapter, however, we shall try to present both the streams of his thought, even though we have agreed to regard him primarily as a believer in concrete idealism.

Before we discuss this issue in detail, it will be well on our part to determine the starting point in Rabindra-philosophy. Wherefrom to start in Rabindranath? Tagore's philosophical ideas have undergone a regular course of evolution. In his earlier writings we get only the bud which opens, while in his maturer years we get the flower in full bloom. Many a critic has interpreted him in the light of ideas that have later evolved.¹

The poet himself is fully conscious of the tide of evolution that occupies the field of his mind. Thus he writes in a letter² addressed to Pramatha Chowdhury on the 24th of May, 1899: "I think an evolution is going on in the world of my compositions and I wonder how long the course shall run. If I live long, I

1. See *Kāvye Rabindranath* by Viswapati Chowdhury.

2. The letter is in Bengali.

am sure to reach a firm solid place from where none can displace me.”†

Chronologically, the starting point in Rabindranath is pessimism. Like those oriental sages who compiled the six systems of Indian philosophy, he starts from pain but it is surely not the last word of his philosophy. Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika and Mīmāṃsā philosophies aim at ameliorating the pain and suffering of the world. Lord Buddha's only mission was to find out the remedy for pain and evil. In *Sandhyā-Sangīt* the poet is overwhelmed by pain, sorrow, doubt and disappointment, from which he finds no relief. To him the entire universe is only a mine of infinite sorrow and pain. None-the-less the poet invites sorrow to take possession of his heart which is all alone.¹ If we try to ascertain the root cause that has led to his disappointment, we find that it lies in his narrow perspective. In *Sandhyā-Sangīt* the poet treats nature as separate from man and he sets up a barrier between man and man. This notion of separateness blurs his vision and leads to sorrows and disappointments. It should be borne in mind that his pessimism is only a means and never an end, while to Schopenhauer it was both a means and an end. Pessimism as a means leading to optimism is a characteristically Indian idea and in Rabindranath we only hear its echo. After *Sandhyā-Sangīt* comes *Prabhāt-Sangīt* where we get the first hint of salvation out of the deep dark ocean of pain and sorrow. The poet sings of his heart being open and the entire universe flowing into it.² Again in *Kaḍi-O-Komal* the poet reverts to the note of pessimism and sinks in doubts and disappointments. In *Mānasī* he tries to seize upon something real but the real always eludes his grasp. In *Sonār Tarī* he learns for the first time that this life is not unreal and its keynote is not grim pessimism. Some eternal Person is the director of the life-channel of the individuals. In

1. “হুখে তুই আয় তুই আয়
নিতান্ত একেলা এ জগৎ”—সন্ধ্যাসঙ্গীত।

2. “জগৎ আজি মোর ক্রমে গেল খুলি
জগৎ আসি সেথা করিছে কোলাকুলি।”—প্রভাসঙ্গীত।

the poem entitled *Visva-Nritya* the poet has shown that an ineffable Person has been directing the entire cosmic history in and through trials and tribulations, pains and evils, towards an eternal goal. In *Chitrā* he gets a glimpse of the real, the long wished for *Jīvan-Devatā* who is at once the hope and bliss of the poet's soul. The poet now realises the value of finiteness; humanity to him is a meaningful item in the cosmic order. This tune continues in *Kanikā*, *Kathā*, *Kāhinī*, *Kalpanā* and *Kshanikā*. *Naivedya* talks of love for human values and surrender to the Infinite. *Kheyā* teaches us the bliss of subordinating the egoistic existence of the individual to the vast cosmic order. In *Gītāñjali*, *Utsarga*, *Gītāli* and *Gītimālya*, the poet's mind is calm and secure. Optimism rings true and he enjoys the company of *Jīvan-Devatā* in pure love and adoration. The final battle with pain and evil has been won and the victory of bliss achieved.

In most philosophies we find that there has been a reasoned account of a flight either from the Absolute to the finites or from the finites to the Absolute. But in Rabindranath we at once start with the Absolute and the finite individuals. He does not start from the one and ascend or descend to the other. At the very outset he emphasises on the finite-infinite nature of the finite individual. He has loved this finite earth of colour and sound. He has loved humanity; human values, to him, are in consonance with values eternal. Thus he sings: "I do not like to die in this beautiful world. I like to live amidst men."^{1†} He has drunk deep the wine of life, enjoyed this earth to his fullest. Has he then considered the mundane values as final? Evidently not. Like Green and Bosanquet he too asserts that the finite individual is torn between finiteness and infinity.² Green says,

1. Vide *Raḍi-O-Komal*—

“মরিতে চাহিনা আমি হৃদয় ভুবনে
মানবের মাঝে আমি বাঁচিবারে চাই।”

2. “এ মর্ত্যের লীলাক্ষেত্রে সুখে দুঃখে অমৃতের স্বাদ

পেয়েছি তা কণে কণে

বারে বারে অসীমেরে দেখেছি সীমার অন্তরালে;”

জগদ্বিনে ১৩নং কবিতা।

“In this mortal region I have
tasted the Immortal, in weal and
woe, at every moment. Again and
again, I have seen the Infinite at
the background of the finites.”†

there is a divine principle at work in man. He has the impulse "to make himself what he has the possibility of becoming, but actually is not, and hence not merely, like the plant or animal, undergoes a process of development, but seeks to, and does develop himself."¹

Bosanquet insists on the finite-infinite nature of the finite individual who, as such, tries to fulfil himself because the spirit of the whole is operative in him. The poet also speaks in the same vein when he asserts : "Yes, I shall become Brahman. I cannot think of any other idea but this. I will definitely say—I shall become Infinite. . . The river says, I shall become the sea. This is not her audacity but truth and hence humility. And this is why she aspires after a union with the sea."² Again in *Sadhana* : "Yes, we must become Brahman. We must not shrink from avowing this. Our existence is meaningless, if we never can expect to realise the highest perfection that there is. If we have an aim and yet can never reach it, then it is no aim at all."³ Here we have the occasion to hear the true Advaita note. The quintessence of Saṃkara's teaching is : I shall become Brahman for I am He.⁴ The fact of diversities that we find around us is only phenomenal. Ontologically, there is only one Brahman and I am that Brahman. In *Personality* the poet says : "What is it in man that asserts its immortality in spite of the obvious fact of death ? It is not his physical body or his mental organization. It is that deeper unity, that ultimate mystery in him, which, from the centre of his world, radiates towards its circumference; which is in the body, yet transcends his body What is it ? . . . It is the personality of man, conscious of its inexhaustible abundance."⁵ This abundance is the Infinite in him. Man is torn between the present and the future for his present has a *nisus* to

1. See Green, *Prolegomena to Ethics*, p. 182. (2nd Ed.)

2. *Śāntiniketan*, Vol. II, p. 836.

3. *Sadhana*, p. 155.

4. सौहर्म्यम्

5. *Personality*, p. 88.

the future. This is also due to his finite-infinite nature. "Man, who is provident, feels for that life of his which is not yet existent, feels much more for that than for the life that is with him ; therefore he is ready to sacrifice his present inclination for the unrealised future. In this he becomes great, for he realises truth. Even to be efficiently selfish a man has to recognise this truth, and has to curb his immediate impulses—in other words, has to be moral. For our moral faculty is the faculty by which we know that life is not made up of fragments purposeless and discontinuous. This moral sense of man not only gives him the power to see that the self has a continuity in time, but it also enables him to see that he is not true when he is only restricted to his own self. He is more in truth than he is in fact."¹

In the scale of evolution, man is not a mean step. The poet never degrades the status of man, for, to him, man is at the apex of creation. He writes, in the vast evolution of the world we come across the first meaning in life-particles, then in animals and finally in man. The outer doors begin to open one after the other, till we come to the innermost region of man. Here we find the finite soaked in the Infinite.² He believes in the emergence of newer and newer values in the course of evolution. In *The Religion of Man* he writes : "We must know that the evolution process of the world has made its progress towards the revelation of its truth—that is to say some inner value which is not in the extension in space and duration in time. When life came out, it did not bring with it any new materials into existence. Its elements are the same which are the materials for the rocks and minerals. Only it evolved a value in them which cannot be measured and analysed."³ Somewhat later he writes : "As an

1. *Thoughts from Tagore*, p. 200. His symbolic drama *Dāk Ghar* (Post Office) bears the same echo. The call of the Infinite has unsettled the mind of Amal. He pines for a letter from Him. He yearns to see Him. His company is the boy's only solace. In *The Gardener* the poet sings, "I am restless. I am athirst for far-away things." Poem No. 5

2. See *Mānuṣer Dharma*, p. 97.

3. *The Religion of Man*, p. 29.

animal, he (man) is still dependent upon Nature, as a Man, he is a sovereign who builds his world and rules it."¹ Man, to him, is the supremest value which gives a finish to the entire evolutionary process. More than that, he deems man as the representative of the creator. "Man as a creation represents the creator and this is why of all creatures it has been possible for him to comprehend this world in his knowledge and in his feeling and in his imagination, to realize in his individual spirit a union with a spirit that is everywhere."² Man is a person and, as such, has to realise his personality. "We are not mere facts in this world, like pieces of stone. We are persons. And therefore we cannot be content with drifting along the stream of circumstances. We have a central ideal of love with which to harmonise our existence, we have to manifest a truth in our life, which is the perfect relationship with the Eternal Person."³ In his lyrics similar ideas have been expressed. Man is superior to any object of creation, for man has a distinct mission to fulfil.

"To the birds you gave songs, the birds gave you songs in return.

You gave me only voice, yet asked for more, and I sing

To all things else you give ; from me you ask."⁴

Let us now follow the poet when he discusses the nature of the Absolute. Throughout the length and breadth of the vast Rabindra-lore, only one voice reverberates and that is the Upaniṣadic teaching : Reality is one, non-dual. Nowhere in his works, do we come across any advocacy for dualism or pluralism.⁵ Monism happens to be the keyword

1. Ibid, p. 44.

2. Ibid, p. 108.

3. *Thoughts from Tagore*, p. 19.

4. *Fruit Gathering*, No. LXXVIII.

5. In a letter he writes, "Previously I remarked that dualism is at the root of creation but the remark is rather incomplete. Creation is the synthesis of dualism and non-dualism."[†] (*Pathe-O-Pather Prānta*) p. 68. It is very difficult to understand what exactly the poet means by the synthesis of dualism and non-dualism. Perhaps all that he means is only concrete monism.

with the poet and he quotes with approval the Upaniṣadic texts and firmly believes in the oneness of reality. There is one, but the one becomes many. 'Ekamebādviṭiyam' happens to be the watchword of his sermons to his students.¹ "The Upaniṣads say with great emphasis, Know thou the One, the Soul."² "Only those of tranquil minds, and none else, can attain abiding joy, by realising within their souls the Being who manifests one essence in a multiplicity of forms."³ But why does the one become many? Śaṅkara, the pronounced Advaita thinker, attributes the reason to māyā. We have remarked elsewhere that the poet does not favour māyā but at least one passage can be quoted which smacks of the conception of māyā. He writes : "Our self is māyā where it is merely individual and finite, where it considers its separateness as absolute ; it is *Satyam* where it recognises its essence in the universal and infinite, in the supreme self, in Paramātman."⁴ To Śaṅkara māyā is inexplicable but, without it, plurality cannot be explained. Brahman, cast through the moulds of māyā, becomes Īśvara and māyā His instrument of creation. "It is the creative power of the eternal God and is therefore eternal ; and, by means of it, the supreme Lord creates the world."⁵ When the veil of māyā is pierced, the finite is no longer finite but Infinite. To become the Absolute is to pierce the veil of māyā. According to Śaṅkara, the Indian absolutistic thinker, in mokṣa or salvation the jīva or the finite individual becomes the Absolute. This is a unique conception whose parallel we do not get anywhere. The absolutistic thinkers of the West (Bradley and Bosanquet) extol the Absolute and disparage the claims of finite individuality. According to them, the finite individuals are the elements which make up the Absolute, but in it they are not in their original form. There they are re-arranged and transformed. The final salvation of the individual lies in

1. See *Śāntiniketan* Vo. I, pp. 146 and 165.

2. *Sādhana*, p. 85.

3. *Ibid*, p. 86.

4. *Ibid*, p. 85.

5. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 572.

being transmuted and re-arranged in the Absolute. "It may be instructive," says Mr. Bradley, "to consider the question (of souls) from the side of the Absolute. We might be tempted to conclude that these souls are the Reality, or at least must be real. But that conclusion would be false, for the souls would fall within the realm of appearance and error. They would be, but, as such, they would not have reality. They would require a resolution and a recomposition, in which their individualities would be transmuted and absorbed. . . . The plurality of souls in the Absolute is therefore appearance and their existence is not genuine. . . . To gain consistency and truth it must be merged, and recomposed in a result in which its speciality must vanish."¹ Prof. Bosanquet too tells us that the content of the imperfect individual has to be "transmuted and re-arranged."²

In some of his poems Rabindranath is rather chary of describing the Absolute and this again reminds us of the conception of the ultimate Reality as Śaṃkara accepts it. Śaṃkara's Absolute cannot be described, for it is beyond logic. "Its nature is inexpressible, for when we say anything of it we make it into a particular thing. . . . Every word employed to denote a thing denotes that thing as associated with a certain genus or act or quality or mode of relation. Brahman has no genus, possesses no qualities, does not act and is related to nothing else."³ We get the same note when the poet sings of the Absolute as "the inscrutable without name and form."⁴ It is a formless and featureless unity. In another poem, the poet writes : "There where spreads the infinite sky for the soul to take her flights in, reigns the stainless white radiance. There is no day nor night, nor form nor colour, and never, never a word."⁵ In one of his poems named 'Aparūpa' in *Utsarga* he even introduces the idea 'Anirvacanīya' or the

1. *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 804-806 (1916).

2. *Logic*, Vol. II, p. 258 (2nd Ed.)

3. Radhakrishnan, *Indian Philosophy*, Vol. II, p. 585 (1st Ed.)

4. *Gitanjali* (Eng.) No. 95.

5. *Ibid*, No. 67.

inexplicable. This is purely an Advaita idea and Śaṅkara is its chief propounder. Here the poet says that the Absolute is formless but it manifests itself in forms. We cannot say how it is possible. We cannot say we know the Absolute nor can we say we do not know it. The Absolute is inexplicable or Anirvacaniya.¹

But this must not be supposed to be the final teaching of Rabindranath, for in him qualified monism excels over absolute monism and a Vaiṣṇava ideal is more acceptable than a Śaṅkara-goal. At this juncture, let us elucidate the central ideas of qualified monism and Vaiṣṇavism with a view to determining the trend of the poet's thoughts after those ideals. As they are in affinity with the concrete monism of Hegel, reference to Hegelian philosophy will not perhaps be irrelevant here.

Viśiṣṭādvaita or qualified monism is the teaching of Rāmānuja who "recognises as ultimate and real the three factors (tattava-traya) of matter (acit), soul (cit) and God (Īśvara). Though equally ultimate, the first two are absolutely dependent upon the last, the dependence being conceived as that of the body upon the soul. Whatever is, is thus the body of God and He is the soul not only of inorganic nature but also of souls or jīvas. It is in this connection that Rāmānuja formulates the relation, so important in his system, of Aprthak Siddhi or inseparability which obtains between substance and attribute and may be found between one substance and another."² The finite individuals in Rāmānuja's philosophy are the vital parts of a whole which may be called the Absolute. The Western Absolutistic thinkers (Bradley and Bosanquet) think of the finites as elements of the Absolute and never as members, but Rāmānuja deems them as members of the whole. The members are the Viśeṣaṇas but they cannot exist by themselves separately. They are the vital points of a whole which is called Viśiṣṭa and hence Rāmānuja's philosophy is Viśiṣṭādvaita or qualified monism.

1. See *Rabi Raśmi*, Vol. II, p. 87.

2. M. Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, pp. 898-99.

Prof. Pringle Pattison thinks that the only possible relation that may exist between the Absolute and finites is an organic one. "From the side of the Absolute the meaning of the finite process must lie in the creation of a world of individual spirits ; for to such alone can He reveal Himself, and from them receive the answering tribute of love and adoration."¹ And he suggests that the nature of the finite individual lies in being a whole of content, "constituting a unique focalization or expression of the Absolute, and thus making its unique contribution to the life of the whole."² The Hegelian Absolute needs the finites as objects of self-expression and needs them most. For him, the finites are the finite manifestations of the Infinite. The whole is in and through the finites. This is the truest organic relation. Rabindranath thinks in a similar way when he considers the finites as love-objects of the Divine. Without the finites, the eternal love-drama comes to a standstill. In the English *Gitanjali* the poet exclaims, "O Thou Lord of all Heavens, where would be thy love if I were not?"³ There is an eternal thirst in the Absolute's heart for the finites. In *Fruit Gathering* : "I came and you woke and the skies blossomed with lights. . . . Yet I know the endless thirst in your heart for sight of me, the thirst that cries at my door in the repeated knockings of sunrise."⁴

Like Hegel, Tagore looks upon the ultimate Reality as mind. This Infinite Mind is the creator and we are the finite representatives of this Infinite Mind. My mind is not separate from that of yours. Had it been so, no communication between mind and mind would be possible. My mind is universal and, though it is circumscribed in my matter, yet it is not thereby segregated.⁵ The Indian Gāyatrī Mantra⁶ has been explained

1. *Idea of God*, p. 295 (2nd Ed.)

2. *Ibid*, p. 269.

3. No. 56.

4. No LXXX.

5. See *Saṅcaya*, p. 122.

6. ॐ भूर्भुवः स्वः तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ।

by him thus : "Let me contemplate the adorable splendour of Him who created the earth, the air and the starry spheres and sends the power of comprehension within our minds."¹ The same reason which is permeating Nature is also in me, the finite individual, and that is why it is possible for me to understand Nature. The external Nature and my reason are the expressions of the same Reason.² What an affinity with Hegelian thoughts ! When Einstein, the celebrated mathematician, asks the poet the question—Does the table exist when nobody is in the house ?—the ready answer comes from his lips—Yes, it remains outside the individual mind but not outside the universal mind.³ Do we not hear the note of Western objective idealism here ?

The Absolute or the ultimate Reality, for Rabindranath, is Satyam or the truth. We find the image of this aspect of Reality in laws of nature or Prakriti.⁴ He quotes a passage from the Upaniṣad and says that the lord of the universe has ordained everything for all time to come.⁵ These irreversible laws that guide Nature form the truth aspect of Divinity. But there is a second aspect of it which may be called ānandam or bliss. The Absolute is rasa or ānandam.⁶ He is also the Sivam or the good. From the ānandam, all created objects do arise.⁷ He is peace and repose (Śāntam) because all his ordained laws are in harmony with one another. He is also the sundaram or the beautiful, for we find the image of bliss in beauty.⁸ Rabindranath believes that these qualities of Godhead are not contradictory to one another. On the contrary, they lie in Divinity in perfect union

1. *The Religion of Man*, p. 98.

2. See *Dharma*, p. 86.

3. Conversation between Einstein and Tagore : See Appendix II, *The Religion of Man*.

4. *Śāntiniketan*, Vol. I. p. 102.

5. *Ibid*, p. 109. "याथातथ्यतोऽर्थान्व्यदधात् शाश्वतीभ्यः समाभ्यः"

6. *Ibid*, p. 106. "रसो वै सः"

7. "आनन्दाद्ध्येव खल्विमानि भूतानि जायन्ते"

8. *Śāntiniketan* Vol. I. p. 102.

and amity. In certain places, he has even identified one with the other. "This is the ultimate object of our existence that we must ever know that beauty is truth, truth beauty."¹ In his lyrics, the poet often paints the ultimate Reality as the Beauty and he warns us not to suppose Beauty as mere phantasy. "Beauty is no phantasy, it has the everlasting meaning of reality."² Critics have raised a hue and cry about the poet's conception of beauty. Does he believe in abstract beauty or concrete one? This has been the moot question on which much intellectual labour has been spent. For our part, we will confine ourselves to quoting the views of the poet himself on the issue. The poem *Urbāṣī*³ happens to be a priceless gem of poetry in beauty. Some opine that *Urbāṣī* stands for beauty in the most abstract and pure form. Some have found in it Shelley's conception of intellectual beauty. But the poet says : "It is not merely abstract. The abstract form must take some material to express itself. The abstract beauty has taken here the matter of a female body in order that it may manifest itself."⁴ Here he is more an Aristotelian than a Platonist. For Plato, beauty is only a form having no connection whatsoever with matter, but according Aristotle, form realises itself in and through matter.

The poet has also described the Absolute as an artist par excellence. He is the magician of rhythm. The seemingly unsubstantial things are made into substances when the rhythm touches them. "What is this rhythm? It is the movement generated and regulated by harmonious restrictions. This is the creative force in the hand of the artist. So long as words remain in an uncadenced prose form, they do not give us any lasting feeling of reality. The moment they are taken and put into rhythm, they vibrate into a radiance.... If the picture were

1. *Sadhana*, p. 141.

2. *Creative Unity*, p. 15.

3. The poem occurs in *Chitra*.

4. From a letter addressed to Charu Banerjee (in Bengali). See *Rabindra Racanāvali*, Vol. IV, (*Grantha Paricaya*).

to consist of a disharmonious aggregate of colours and lines, it would be deadly still. In perfect rhythm, the art form becomes like the stars which in their seeming stillness are never still, like a motionless flame which is nothing but movement.”¹

The Absolute is a singer and the universe is His song. “The infinite and the finite are one as song and singing are one.”² In the first volume of *Śāntiniketan*, the poet writes that the universe in the form of a song is never separated from the eternal singer.³ Nor is the song made of any external stuff. It is His very heart bursting into a melody. The entire cosmic process exists, in Him, in the form of a complete song but its manifestation is not all at once. The expression is subject to the law of evolution but every step therein bespeaks the central note.

The Absolute is further described as a lover. This conception of Divine love is a purely Vaiṣṇava ideal and here we might venture to enumerate the main characteristics of such an ideal. The philosophy of Vaiṣṇavism lays emphasis on a firm organic relation between God and man. Its first principle is that everything is God and all the actions of man should be dedicated to Him.⁴ To “see God in everything and to discover in the self, which is God, everything, are the two inveterate attitudes of a Vaiṣṇava.”⁵ Rabindranath imbibes the Vaiṣṇava

1. *Thoughts from Tagore*, p. 178.

2. *Personality*, p. 57.

3. P. 58.

4. “कायेन वाचा मनसेन्द्रियैर्वा
बुद्ध्यात्मना वानुसृतस्वभावात्
करोति यद् यत् सकलं परस्मै
नारायणा येति समर्पयेत् तत्”

श्रीमद्भागवत ११।२।३६ ॥

5. सर्वभूतेषु यः पश्येत् भगवद्भावमात्मनः ।
भूतानि भगवत्यात्मन्येष भागवतोत्तमः ॥

श्रीमद्भागवत ११।२।४४ ॥

faith when he says that He permeates the entire universe.¹ The poet insists on at-homeness in all (*Sarvānubhūti*). This attitude is well expressed in the poem “*Basundharā*” of *Sonār Tarī* where the poet likes to spread his own self over all water, land and the sky. A feeling of intimate relationship irresistibly draws the poet’s self to the wide universe.² Vaiṣṇavas say, God is *rasa* and that is why He, though one, becomes many. He creates man for He plays the game of love with him. The Infinite wilfully and gladly allows itself to be caught in the snares of the finite. Our poet mingles his tune with them when he says : There is One and the One says, I shall become many. The One wanted to appreciate its unity in diversity and the creation began.³ The Vaiṣṇavas say, God is eternal, man is eternal and love too. In “*Anantaprem*” of *Mānasī*, the poet expresses this truth. The lover and the beloved have been loving each other through all eternity.⁴ At every birth, this love-drama is being enacted anew. The Infinite God and man are bound up in an indissoluble tie and the truth of the one lies in that of the other. The Infinite manifests itself in the finite and herein lies its truth and beauty. The Infinite again needs the company of the finite and the latter aspires after a resolution in the former.⁵

The kernel of Vaiṣṇava-lore lies in *viraha* or separation.

1. *Thoughts from Tagore*, p. 126.

2. *Basundharā* from *Sonār Tarī* :

“আমারে ফিরিয়ে লহ, অগ্নি বহুজ্বরে,
কালের সন্তানে তব কোলের ভিতরে,
বিপুল অঞ্চল তলে । ওগো মা মুখরি,
তোমার মুক্তিকা মাঝে বাণ্ড হ’য়ে রই,
দ্বিধাদিকে আপনারে দিই বিস্তারিণী..... ।”

3. See article captioned *Sāhitya Tattva* by Rabindranath Tagore, *Prabās* (1841, *Vaiśākh*).

4. “আমরা দুজনে ভাসিরা এসেছি যুগল প্রেমের স্রোতে
অনাধি কালের ক্ষয়-উৎস হ’তে ।”

5. “অসীম সে চাহে সীমার নিবিড় সজ
সীমা হ’তে চায় অসীমের মাঝে হারা”—*Utsarga*.

The supreme Lord has separated man from Him so that He may feel the pangs of separation. Though God is one, yet He creates within Him a plurality of souls, for from them He receives love and adoration. It is undoubtedly a limitation of God but a self-imposed one. The fulfilment of Vaiṣṇava Godhead lies in love and this is why He imposes on Him the above-said limitations. There is an eternal thirst in Him for the finite's company.

In *Fruit Gathering* :

“Day after day you buy your sunrise from my heart,
and you find your love carven into the image of my life.”¹

This eternal love-drama between the Deity and the devotee has been amply described by the poet in his conception of Jīvan-Devatā. The poet as a devotee feels that he is being led by his Deity along the path of life and death. The relation between the two is the most intimate and is nothing but love. Before we discuss further the poet's conception of Jīvan-Devatā, let us quote in full the poem bearing the same name. We would do well to remember that the poet's conception of it is not circumscribed to one poem only but that all through his writings we find copious references to the same topic. Moreover, this conception of the poet's has undergone a regular course of evolution. Here is the poem.

“Thou who art the innermost spirit of my being,
art thou pleased,
Lord of my life ?
For I gave to thee my cup
filled with all the pain and delight
that the crushed grapes of my heart had surrendered ;

1. No. L XXVII.

Also in Bengali *Gitanjali* :

“হে মোর দেবতা ভরিয়া এ দেহ প্রাণ
কি অমৃত তুমি চাহ করিবারে পান ?”

(For translation See English *Gitanjali* No. 65.

All through his writings we find poems of the Jīvan-Devatā group. Even as late as 1940 he writes in *Nabajātaka*¹ : “My play in this world-house comes to an end and now comes the time when the door of the house shall be closed. O the innermost spirit of my life ! Come now by my side. Give me the peace of your company at the end of my journey.”†

Critics are divided in their opinions on the question : Is Jīvan-Devatā the poet’s personal Deity or is He the universal Deity (Viśva-Devatā) ? Mr. P. C. Mahalanobis likes to identify Jīvan-Devatā with the personal Deity of the poet’s life, but Mr. Subodh Chandra Sen Gupta² opines that Jīvan-Devatā is only the Viśva-Devatā in disguise. Dr. Nihar Ranjan Ray thinks that there is an intimate connection between the poet’s intuition of Jīvan-Devatā and his feeling of universalism. We get the best proof of it in the first poem of *Mānasī*. This Mānasī or Deity in mental imagery is the guiding star of the poet’s life and assumes various forms such as the husband, friend, wife or the beloved lady.³ According to Mr. Thompson the poet found “a deep and intimate communion with God into which the Jīvan-Devatā feeling merged.”⁴ That the poet never likes to circumscribe Jīvan-Devatā to the limits of his own life, will be evidenced by his immortal poems in *Naivedya*. Here we find the Deity permeating the entire world, nay the cosmic whole. The fontal Reality of which he speaks is only the Viśva-Devatā. Seen in an individual perspective, the Viśva-Devatā appears to be the Jīvan-Devatā. We have already remarked that there has been an

1. “এ ঘরে কুরাল খেলা
এল দ্বার রুখিবার বেলা
বিলম্ববিহীন দিন শেষে
কিরিয়া দাঁড়াও এসে
যে ছিলে গোপনচর
জীবনের অন্তরতর”

2. See *Rabindranath* by S. Sen Gupta.

3. See in *Kavipariciti* the article by Nihar Ranjan Ray, pp. 167-169.

4. *Rabindranath Tagore, Poet and Dramatist*, p. 118.

evolution in the poet's conception of Jīvan-Devatā.¹ In *Sonār Tarī* the Jīvan-Devatā has not yet manifested Himself in His full stature. Here we get only the hints and indications of His arrival. In the poems entitled "Mānas-Sundarī" and "Niruddeś-Jātrā" we get a faint vision of the true Jīvan-Devatā; while in *Citrā*² in the poem "Antaryāmī" we attain a deeper and clearer vision of the Deity. The poem entitled Jīvan-Devatā forms the third layer, while in the fourth layer we find Jīvan-Devatā as the Viśva-Devatā. It should not be supposed that Viśva-Devatā has emerged out of Jīvan-Devatā or that the former has become the latter in course of time. On the contrary in Rabindranath, Jīvan-Devatā is Viśva-Devatā, and Viśva-Devatā, Jīvan-Devatā.³

Let us now sum up our discussion. The poet's Infinite or Jīvan-Devatā needs the finites and needs them most. The relation between the two is one of intimate love and without love Godhead is never fulfilled. The finites are not passing phenomena nor are they unreal. They are as much real as Jīvan-Devatā Himself. A truly organic relation exists between the two, the Infinite and the finite, inasmuch as one exists in and through the other.

Before we close the chapter, we should like to discuss one more pertinent question about the nature of the Absolute. Is the poet's Absolute in time? Or, to put it in other words, is his Absolute static or dynamic? Eleatics believe in a changeless Reality and the Indian thinker Śaṅkara says that all change is illusion. The Heraclitians say that Reality is nothing but change. Bergson's Reality is changing, the *Élan vital* is ever progressing. William James's God is ever growing; the modern schools of neo-realism and neo-idealism denounce in strongest terms the

1. See *Rabindra Kāvya Pravāha* by P. Bisi, pp. 14, 15.

2. *Citrā* is a book of poems in Bengali. It should not be confused with English Chitra which happens to be the English rendering of the drama Chitrāṅgadā.

3. Here the word evolution has not been used in its usual technical sense. By it we mean only the change in poet's delineation of the subject. The change however is only a change of perspective.

conception of a block universe. They tend to affirm that Reality is a history or an unending process. Rabindranath too does not deny change and movement. *Balākā* is his lyric of change and movement. Prof. Sisir Kumar Maitra finds much similarity of ideas between Bergson and the author of *Balākā*.¹

In *Balākā* the poet describes the change-aspect of Reality. Interrogating the river about change, he writes : "You move on, move on, move in speed. You fly undaunted and seldom do you look back."†² The life-process is moving on and on in an infinite pursuit. Referring to *Haṃsa-balākā*, the poet remarks, the life-process of the cosmos has heard the singular voice which is—not here, not here but somewhere else ! This is why we find life around us fully dynamic. It is progressing for it has received within it the *nisus* to the Eternal. If for a moment the life-urge stops in tiredness, at once the universe is filled with matter.³ This reminds us of the philosophy of Bergson whose *Élan vital* is ever on move. The onward march of life is the only Reality and if somehow this progressing flow is retarded and in consequence there is a backward move, matter arises. What an affinity of ideas between Rabindranath and Bergson !⁴

1. See *Calcutta Review* 1926. Article on Rabindranath and Bergson by S. K. Maitra.

2. "শুধু ধাও শুধু ধাও ; শুধু বেগে ধাও

উদ্যম উধাও

কিরে নাহি চাও"—*Balākā* No. 8.

3. "যদি তুমি মুহুর্তের তরে

ক্লান্তি ভরে

দাঁড়াও থমকি

অমনি চমকি

উচ্ছিন্না উঠিবে বিশ্ব পুঞ্জ পুঞ্জ বস্তুর পর্বতে"—*Balākā* No. 8.

4. His symbolic drama, *Red Oleanders*, beautifully describes the strife between life-force and matter. Nandini symbolises the vital force and Yakṣa-king matter. Nandini moves on and on while the king tries to put the clock back. Life pays no heed to matter but matter tries to crush life. In the long run, life rules over matter. Nandini wins and the King too is won over.

But is change the last word of philosophy ? Is movement the *sine qua non* of Reality ? Our poet's answer is in the negative. He believes that the Absolute as such cannot change, though He contains within Him the manifold of changes. In the same *Balāṅkā* he affirms : the One is eternal, It is truth.¹ This One is realising Itself in the many that are in time. The Infinite self has got a purpose which is being manifested in change and movement. The universe is being governed not by a push but by a pull. The Infinite or the Absolute does not change, though He contains histories without number. In contemporary philosophy we find similar ideas in Bosanquet. Bosanquet too solves the problem of the Absolute and time thus : "The foundational nature of all that is, while containing the infinite changes which are the revelation of its inexhaustible life, not confinable within a single direction or temporal career, is not itself and as such engaged in progress and mutation."²

1. "সত্য সেই চিরন্তন এক"—*Balāṅkā* No. 87.

2. *Meeting of Extremes in Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 210.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

By MADAN GOPAL

THE APPEARANCE of Samuel Butler's posthumous book *The Way of All Flesh*, marked the beginnings of a new era in English literature. It was the first of the blows to the Victorian traditions. Among writers who represented this spirit of revolt were H. G. Wells, Galsworthy, Arnold Bennett and Shaw. These were the gods of the pre-war generation. The Great War, however, brought about a major transformation in the world of ideas and literature as also elsewhere. The war-weary world wanted a reaction to the pre-war beliefs and the accepted morals. James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, E. M. Forster, D. H. Lawrence, Wilfred Owen, T. S. Eliot, Lytton Strachey, Hemmingway and Aldous Huxley were among those who challenged the pre-war literary gods and their outlook on the contemporary problems. Huxley was among the pioneers who set a fashion in "debunking"—later on a flourishing trade in the field of literature.

Aldous Huxley is the greatest satirist since Swift. His shattering satire on the "fads of yesterday and the foibles of tomorrow," his Puck-like humour, his eighteenth-century urbanity and polish place him in a class of his own. He is a scientist, historian, politician, philosopher, sexualologist, reformer, mystic, thinker and novelist and above all an essayist. Yes "above all," because he is always an essayist. So much is he enamoured by the romance of words that he would forego an idea in the quest of a beautiful phrase or a striking word. It also constitutes his weakness because his works lack compactness and unity of plot.

Aldous Huxley is the true mirror of our age. He is the interpreter of the contemporary intellectuals and anti-sentimentalists. He has been a sensitive barometer which with a remarkable

accuracy has shown our progressive depression. His books are a chronological record of the mental state of the world during the past twenty years. They constitute, like Shaw's works, propaganda, not art ; they shall live so long as the contemporary problems remain unsolved.

In all his works, the author is concerned with the interior life of his characters, the life of the mind and particularly that part, the consciousness, where the moral principle operates. His characters keep diaries, take down notes and have read and been influenced by great authors. Himself an encyclopedia—it is indeed indispensable to have your Webster by your side when you read Huxley—his chief characters have a very comprehensive mind. They represent a particular set of people and they always live in a world of multitudinous thoughts. "One entered the world having ready-made ideas about everything. One had a philosophy and tried to make life fit into it. . . . In the world of ideas everything was clear ; in life all was obscure, embroiled." Their intellectualism brings about *ennui*. They are always self-conscious. It might be remembered that Huxley concedes that only the ignorant can be dogmatically certain : it is given only to men of experience and knowledge to doubt.

The intellectual of today has practically no guide through the labyrinths of this world of baffling complexity. He is confused by the staggering advances in all walks of life. He reasons out to believe in Reason. Then he doubts his very reasoning. Everywhere he finds huge question marks : "Why" "How", "What". Rampion significantly calls Spendrall "a Peter Pan—a'là Dostoevsky-cum-de Musset-cum-the Nineties-cum-Bunyan-cum-Byron and the Marquis de Sade".

Novel, according to Huxley, is an occasion for "thought adventure". No other writer takes as much pains as he to polish his works. And no other writer takes so much pains with the ideas of his characters. Therein lies Huxley's speciality. Here he is *par excellence*. He goes through life keenly observing, deeply reflecting on the contemporary movements and ideas.

A clever assortment of these ideas into chapters makes up his books.

Important characters in Huxley's novels tend to become types. They are the mouth-pieces of the creator's ideas on art, science, society and sex. Certainly influenced by D. H. Lawrence's cult of health animalism, he is not obsessed by sex. He is fresh and frank on the subject. His representative characters are a key to his writing and philosophy.

Priscilla Wimbush dallies in *Crome Yellow* (1921) with New Thought, Auras, Spirit photography, Theosophic lore, Occultism and pseudo-mysticism. She casts horoscopes and proceeds "as the stars dictate". All these practices, we know, became the fashion of the day immediately after the war.

Mary has mastered Havelock Ellis and Sigmund Freud. She is always afraid of repressions. "It's always dangerous to repress one's instincts . . . I constantly dream that I am falling down wells and sometimes I even dream that I am climbing up ladders." She is decided that she "can't go on dreaming night after night that (she is) falling down a well. It's too dangerous."

Lucy Tantamount in *Point Counter Point* is typical of the time-killers and pleasure-pursuers among the modern girls. She is mad after sensations and cannot stick to one lover for more than an extremely limited period. She parades her carnality: "she could pursue her pleasure as a man pursues his, remorselessly, single-mindedly, without allowing her thoughts and feelings to be the least involved." So "she floats through life instead of trudging. . . she flits from flower to flower doing a good deal of damage to the flower but getting nothing but fun out of it herself." Within half an hour of her meeting a stranger she yields to him: "He came to me as though he were going to kill me, with clenched teeth. I shut my eyes like a Christian martyr in front of a lion. Martyrdom's exciting. Letting oneself be hurt, humiliated, used like a door-mat. . . I like it. Besides, the door-mat uses the user!" Queer logic! She too needed "victims".

Antic Hay (1923) is woven round the life of Gumbriel, a young man typical of the post-war generation of pleasure-seekers. He is morally and intellectually free and has no occupation. His life becomes an intolerable boredom. Huxley has in a masterly fashion portrayed Gumbriel's inferiority complex.

Spendrall is another character, deserving study. Rampion summarises him thus : "The trouble with you, Spendrall, is that you really hate yourself. You hate the very source of your life, its ultimate basis,—for there's no denying it : Sex *is* fundamental. And you hate it, hated it." Rampion does not believe in the soul-development philosophy : "This damned soul, this damned abstract soul, it is like a kind of cancer eating up the real human natural reality, spreading and spreading at its expense.... The cancer may have a beautiful shape ; but damn it all, the body's more beautiful. I don't want your spiritual cancer."

Calamay in *Those Barren Leaves* is given to constant self-analysis. His mind is rent asunder. Nothing interests him. He runs away, becomes a hermit and gives himself up to meditation. The name of the book is in itself significant ; the sap and vigour of the tree of life is dried up, only "barren leaves" remain.

Philip Quarles in Huxley's most important work, *Point Counter Point*, is an interesting psychological study. He is drawn from the cultured classes of today. He, with others, is presented "spatially, not chronologically". He is an intellectual of today, a writer (as are so many characters in Huxley's novels). He is well-read and has travelled widely, practised Yoga, performed the breathing exercises and tried to believe that "he does not exist". He is at home in the world of ideas and thoughts : in society, he is a misfit. He attends bridge parties but cannot play bridge himself. For this he curses his own self because these extra-mural activities are healthier. But it is not in his blood to be so. He hates himself because he is so different from others. Yet he knows that he cannot be like them. He is a very complex creature ; a cynic, a mystic, humanitarian and a

misanthrope. He tries to see all things *including himself* from all points of view, physically, chemically, biologically, philosophically and atomistically. He lives in a world of point-events. The smallest insignificant event in his life would start associations i. e., trains of thoughts ; he is only a shade different from James Joyce's Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses*. Different because he can view things in a detached light, getting out of himself. He entertains doubts about his very doubts. He is disillusioned in a way and grants the superiority of all over idealists and intellectuals. He believes in the insignificance of man in this vast universe, which is just one of several such universes. Life to him seems purposeless. Nothing is of permanent value to him.

Crome Yellow was a satire on the cult of pseudo-occultism and the philosophy which was responsible for the loss of millions of lives in 1914-1918. *Brave New World* which appeared in 1932 i. e., one year earlier than H. G. Wells' *Shape of Things to Come*, is the pessimistic mental projection of the future of mechanical civilisation in 2700 A. D., when men and women would be produced in laboratories, people would swear by Mr. Ford and would take *Soma* pills for stimulants. Indeed science has failed just as religion and culture failed.

The four latest books by Huxley, *Eveless in Gaza*, *Ends and Means*, *After Many a Summer*, and his recent biographical study *Grav Eminence* show that his attitude towards life has radically changed. It represents the contemporary longing of the intellectual for something more positive, a new integration of values. He has come to believe in Buddha's ideal of non-attachment, Gandhiji's cult of non-violence, the unity of human life, and "unity in diversity". "For the happiness of humanity spiritual air is as necessary as physical air we breathe." Civilisation which in *Point Counter Point* was "harmony and completeness" becomes in "*After Many a Summer*" a "capacity to kick the immediate lower order." God which used to be "a feeling in the pit of the stomach hypostatized" has become a mystic reality. So much so that "a totally unmystical world would be a world totally blind

and insane.” Today Faith, not Reason guides Huxley. But he never gives up the yardstick of logic and almost succeeds in convincing the reader of his Faith by Reason.

In *After Many a Summer* Huxley’s philosophy is mostly inspired by Hindu and Buddhistic scriptures. Prolongation of life cannot lead to happiness as some of the westerners have come to believe. Extra life means Time and “Time is potential evil and craving converts the potentiality into actual evil.” Only the real Good can release us from misery ; Good is that which contributes to liberation—the highest ideal—the liberation from Time and craving, liberation into union with God.” And further, the real Good can be achieved either on a sub-human plane, i.e., the level of animality or a super human plane, i.e. the level of the spirit. Buddhistic philosophy has played a great part in the intellectual development of Huxley.

Huxley’s is a cosmopolitan mind. His world is not limited to that of the European writers. That’s why his books are of interest not only to the English or the American but to all thinking minds of the world. This is borne out by his reference to India and things Indian. It is true that Huxley does not approve of everything Indian. But we need not expect him to do so. As an individual thinker he has every right to his opinions about things here as elsewhere. He did not eulogise the Taj—“Marble covers many a sin”—unlike most tourists from Europe. None can, however, impute motives. At least he has not deliberately misrepresented India like Kipling or Macnunn or Miss Mayo. He has refrained from this sort of malicious propaganda.

His integrity as an intellectual is beyond doubt. He is a pacifist who, unlike C. E. M. Joad and Bertrand Russell, did not throw off his pacifist ideals overboard when the war came. Instead he underwent a voluntary exile in America.

UPANISADIC SYMBOLISM

(The Cosmic and the Transcendental)*

By NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

THE SUPREME REALITY, which is always called Brahman in the Upaniṣads, has to be known and experienced in two ways ; for it has two fundamental aspects or modes of being. The Brahman is universal and it is transcendental. The Truth, *satyam*, the Upaniṣad says in its symbolic etymology, is “This” (or, He) and “That” (*syat+tyat* i.e. *sat+tat*). “This” means the Universal Brahman : it is what is referred to when the Upaniṣad says : *Īśāvāsyamidam sarvām* : All this is for habitation by the Lord ;
or, *Sarvām khalvidam brahma* : All this is indeed the Brahman ;
or, *Sa evedam sarvām* : He is indeed all this ;
or, *Ahamevedam sarvām* : I am indeed all this ;
or, *Ātmaivedam sarvām* : The Self indeed is all this ;
or again, *Sarvamasmi* : I am all.

The *Chāndogya* gives a whole typical scheme of this universal reality and explains how to realise it and what are the results of the experience. The Universal Brahman means the cosmic movement, the cyclic march of things and events taken in its global aspect. The typical movement that symbolises and epitomises the phenomenon, embodies the truth, is that of the sun. The movement consists of five stages which are called the five-fold *sāma*. *Sāma* means the equal Brahman that is ever present in all, the Upaniṣad itself says deriving the word from *sama*. It is *Sāma* also because it is a rhythmic movement, a cadence—a music of the spheres. And a rhythmic movement, in virtue of its being a wave, consists of these five stages : (1) the start, (2) the rise, (3) the peak, (4) the decline and (5) the fall. Now the sun follows this curve and marks out the familiar divisions of the day : dawn, forenoon, noon, afternoon

* *C hāndogya*, II, III.

and sunset. Sometimes two other stages are added, one at each end, one of preparation and another of final lapse—the two twilights with regard to the sun—and then we have seven instead of five *sāmas*. Like the Sun, the Fire—that is to say, the sacrificial Fire—can also be seen in its fivefold cyclic movement : (1) the lighting, (2) the smoke, (3) the flame ; (4) smouldering and finally (5) extinction—the fuel as it is rubbed to produce the fire and the ashes may be added as the two supernumerary stages. Or again, we may take the cycle of five seasons or of the five worlds or of the deities that control these worlds. The living wealth of this earth is also symbolised in a quintette—goat and sheep and cattle and horse and finally man. Coming to the microcosm, we have in man the cycle of his five senses, basis of all knowledge and activity. For the macrocosm, to bring out its vast extra-human complexity, the Upaniṣad refers to a quintette, each term of which is again a trinity : (1) the threefold Veda, the Divine Word that is the origin of creation, (2) the three worlds or fields—earth, air-belt or atmosphere and space, (3) the three principles or deities ruling respectively these worlds—Fire, Air and Sun, (4) their expressions, emanations or embodiments—stars and birds and light-rays, and finally (5) the original inhabitants of these worlds—to earth belong the reptiles, to the mid-region the Gandharvas and to heaven the ancient Fathers.

Now, this is the All, the Universal. One has to realise it and possess in one's consciousness. And that can be done only in one way : one has to identify oneself with it, be one with it, become it. Thus by losing one's individuality one lives the life universal ; the small lean separate life is enlarged and moulded in the rhythm of the Rich and the Vast. It is thus that man shares in the consciousness and energy that inspire and move and sustain the cosmos. The Upaniṣad most emphatically enjoins that one must not decry this cosmic godhead or deny any of its elements, not even such as are a taboo to the puritan mind. It is in and through an unimpaired global consciousness

that one attains the All-Life and lives uninterruptedly and perennially : *Sarvamanveti Jyok Jīvati*.

Still, the Upaniṣad says this is not the final end. There is yet a higher status of reality and consciousness to which one has to rise. For beyond the Cosmos lies the Transcendent. The Upaniṣad expresses this truth and experience in various symbols. The cosmic reality, we have seen, is often conceived as a septenary, a unity of seven elements, principles and worlds. Further to give it its full complex value, it is considered not as a simple septet, but a three-fold heptade—the whole gamut, as it were, consisting of 21 notes or syllables. The Upaniṣad says, this number does not exhaust the entire range ; for there is yet a 22nd place. This is the world beyond the Sun, griefless and deathless, the supreme Selfhood. The Veda also sometimes speaks of the integral reality as being represented by the number 100 which is 99+1 ; in other words, 99 represents the cosmic or universal, the unity being the reality beyond, the Transcendent.

Elsewhere the Upaniṣad describes more graphically this truth and the experience of it. It is said there that the sun has five—we note the familiar five—movements of rising and setting : (1) from East to West, (2) from South to North, (3) from West to East, (4) from North to South and (5) from above—from the Zenith—downward. These are the five normal and apparent movements. But there is a sixth one ; rather it is not a movement, but a status, where the sun neither rises nor sets, but is always visible fixed in the same position.

Some Western and Westernised scholars have tried to show that the phenomenon described here is an exclusively natural phenomenon, actually visible in the polar region where the sun never sets for six months and moves in a circle whose plane is parallel to the place of the horizon on the summer solstice and is gradually inclined as the sun regresses towards the equinox (on which day just half the solar disc is visible above the horizon). The sun may be said there to move in the direction East-South-West-North and again East. Indeed the Upaniṣad

mentions the positions of the sun in that order and gives a character to each successive station. The Ray from the East is red, symbolising the *Rik*, the Southern Ray is white, symbolising the *Yajur*, the Western Ray is black symbolising the *Atharva*. The natural phenomenon, however, might have been or might not have been before the mind's eye of the Rishi, but the symbolism, the esotericism of it is clear enough in the way the Rishi speaks of it. Also, apart from the first four movements (which it is already sufficiently difficult to identify completely with what is visible), the fifth movement, as a separate descending movement from above appears to be a foreign element in context. And although, with regard to the sixth movement or status, the sun is visible as such exactly from the point of the North Pole for a while, the ring of the Rishi's utterance is unmistakably spiritual, it cannot but refer to a fact of inner consciousness—that is at least what the physical fact conveys to the Rishi and what he seeks to convey and express primarily.

Now this is what is sought to be conveyed and expressed. The five movements of the sun here also are nothing but the five *sāmas* and they refer to the cycle of the Cosmic or Universal Brahman. The sixth status where all movement ceases, where there is no rising and setting, no ebb and flow, no waxing and waning, where there is the immutable, the ever-same unity, is very evidently the Transcendental Brahman. It is That to which the Vedic Rishi refers when he prays for a constant and fixed vision of the eternal Sun—*jyok ca sūryam drīṣe*.

It would be interesting to know what the five ranges or levels or movements of consciousness exactly are that make up the Universal Brahman described in this passage. It is the mystic knowledge, the Upaniṣad says, of the secret delight in things—*madhvidyā*. The five ranges are the five fundamental principles of delight—immortalities, the Veda would say—that form the inner core of the pyramid of creation. They form a rising tier and are ruled respectively by the gods—Agni, Indra, Varuṇa, Soma and Brahmā—with their emanations and instru-

mental personalities—the Vasus, the Rudras, the Ādityas, the Maruts and the Sādhyas. We suggest that these refer to the five well-known levels of being, the modes or nodi of consciousness or something very much like them. The Upaniṣad speaks elsewhere of the five sheaths. The six Cakras of the Tāntric system lie in the same line. The first and the basic mode is the physical and the ascent from the physical : Agni and the Vasus are always intimately connected with the earth and earth-principle (it can be compared with the Mālādhāra of the Tantras). Next, second in the line of ascent is the Vital, the centre of power and dynamism of which the Rudras are the deities and Indra the presiding God (cf. Swādhiṣṭhāna of the Tantras—the navel centre). Indra, in the Vedas, has two aspects, one of knowledge and vision and the other of dynamic force and drive. In the first aspect he is more often considered as the Lord of the Mind, of the Luminous Mind. In the present passage, Indra is taken in his second aspect and instead of the Maruts with whom he is usually invoked has the Rudras as his agents and associates. The third in the line of ascension is the region of Varuṇa and the Ādityas, that is to say, of the large Mind and its lights—perhaps it can be connected with Tāntric Ājnācakra. The fourth is the domain of Soma and the Maruts—this seems to be the inner heart, the fount of delight and keen and sweeping aspirations—the Anāhata of the Tantras. The fifth is the region of the crown of the head, the domain of Brahmā and the Sādhyas : it is the Overmind status from where comes the descending inflatus, the creative Māyā of Brahma. And when you go beyond, you pass into the ultimate status of the Sun, the reality absolute, the Transcendent which is indescribable, unseizable, indeterminate, indeterminable, incommensurable ; and once there, one never returns, never—*na ca punarāvartate na ca punarāvartate*.

LOOKING BACK

By RATHINDRANATH TAGORE

PLAY-ACTING had an important place in the social and intellectual life in our family residence at Jorasanko. My father was born in this tradition and started quite early to write dramas and have them performed by members of the family, usually taking the leading part himself.

His earliest play produced in this way is *Bālmiki Pratibhā* (The Genius of Valmiki) in 1881 when he was barely twenty. In the writing and staging of this play his elder brother Jyotirindranath not only greatly encouraged him but collaborated with him in setting tunes to the songs. The play is an opera, the first of its kind attempted in this country. In order to render the music capable of interpreting the characterization and the movements dramatically, the composers did not mind adapting Western modes and tunes where necessary. From the point of view of music it was a bold and novel experiment. Although the opera was composed when the author was yet in his teens it has since then been staged quite often* and is still held in esteem. Misfortune seems to have attended its first performance in the month of February 1881 when the stage had been set up on the roof of the Jorasanko house. A storm made a clean sweep of the whole bamboo structure. The performance, nevertheless, took place and Bankim Chandra Chatterji, the celebrated Bengali novelist, who happened to be present, referred to it in high terms in the pages of the *Bangadarsan*. Later on it was performed in the courtyard of our house in the presence of Lady Lansdowne. The cast, drawn from our own family, were nearly all accomplished musicians and some of them no mean actors. The performance proved a success, the

* It was last staged at Santiniketan on 28 December 1942.

novelty of its form and music giving a pleasant surprise to the élite of the then capital, who had been invited to witness it. The only evidence of this performance we now have are two photographs of one of the scenes which have become fairly familiar to the public, having been reproduced in father's collected works.

Māyār Khelā (Sport of Illusion) is the only other opera that father has composed. This was published in book form in 1888. It is perhaps more original than *Bālmiki Pratibha* whose theme is taken from the *Ramayana* and the music of which shows foreign influence. *Māyār Khelā* was written at the request of Mrs. P. K. Ray for the benefit of a charitable ladies' association known as the Sakhi Samiti, who performed it themselves for the first time in Bethune College ; it has since been produced fairly often, mostly for charity.

Then followed *Rājā-O-Rāni* (The King and the Queen) and *Bisarjan*, dramas in the real sense. The first of these was staged at Birjitalao at the residence of my uncle Satyendranath. My mother was persuaded to take the part of Narayani, the first and only time she appeared on the stage.

Possibly the premier performance of *Bisarjan* took place at 49 Park Street, where my uncle Satyendranath had moved from his previous residence at Birjitalao. It is interesting to note that His Highness Bir Chandra Manikya, the then Maharaja of Tippera, who took keen interest in the play the subject matter of which has reference to an episode in the ancient history of his own dynasty, was present at this performance. The well-known photograph of father as Raghupati bemoaning the death of Jayasingha seems to have been taken on this occasion. All the above events occurred before I was born. I have only a very vague recollection of the later performance of *Bisarjan* when it was produced by the Sangit Samaj in its club house at Cornwallis street.

Rājā-O-Rāni has the distinction of being a much-performed - and much-transformed play, both in public and private, inasmuch

as it has been produced under the three distinct names and forms of *Rājā-O-Rāni*, *Bhairaber Boli* and *Tapati*. Eye-witnesses of the first performance will recollect the adverse criticism in the papers of the somewhat unconventional relationship subsisting between the performers on and off the stage ; nor could they possibly forget the G. O. M.,—Akshoy Mazumdar, of comic fame, the stalwart of many a comedy and the first and foremost robber in *Balmiki-Pratibha*, who just missed turning pathos into bathos in a specially moving scene of *Rājā-O-Rāni* by his usual comical grimaces, and yet whose one grievance was that he had never been given the tragic part he could have done justice to !

Speaking of acting and singing, it is difficult not to recall the poetic and pathetic figure of my cousin Abhi, who acted so superbly and sang so sweetly in *Māyār Khelā*, and died so young and full of promise.

Unfortunately, I have to rely on hearsay in these matters, as I do not happen to be old enough to give any details regarding the performances of the above four pieces except the bare facts already mentioned. My recollection goes back only to the early days of the asrama, when father began to write plays suitable for being staged by the teachers and students of Santiniketan. They are therefore a class by themselves, a distinct departure from his previous dramas, which were romantic and psychological in treatment. The three plays—*Sāradotsab*, *Acalāyatan* and *Fālguni*—may be classified as belonging to the Santiniketan Series. Apart from their intrinsic value and distinctive flavour, they have an added interest inasmuch as they form a link between the classical series (*Rājā-O-Rāni* & *Bisarjan*) and the allegorical if not mystic series of dramas that followed—*Dākghar*, *Rājā*, *Tapati*, etc. Although in the Santiniketan Series of plays the theme is simple, an allegorical treatment of the whole subject has crept in. Another characteristic, born of necessity, is the complete absence of female characters in these three plays.

I should think the tradition of play acting at Santiniketan

had its beginning even before *Sāradotsab* was written, when *Bisarjan* was staged by the asrama in the winter of 1902. We had at that time neither any stage nor any of the paraphernalia connected with it. But the want of worldly goods was amply compensated for by ardour and enthusiasm. There were very few students then, so the three of us—Santosh Mazumdar, Nayan Chatterji and myself—had to take some of the leading parts. But as the rehearsals progressed the teachers got alarmed and complained to father that if the project be not dropped at once there was no chance of our passing the Entrance Examination which was drawing near. But our joy knew no bounds when father turned a deaf ear to their importunities and the rehearsals continued merrily as before. I may mention here that such opposition from teachers has recurred ever since with monotonous regularity, only to be met with the inevitable fate it deserved from father.

The ramshackle shed behind the Library, used as the Dining Hall, was selected for the stage and auditorium. Although for the making of the stage there were only a few rickety bedsteads, an artist from Calcutta was requisitioned to paint the scenes. He had a facile brush and could wield it to produce bizarre effects, not unlike the painted rags used for scenes, the stock-in-trade of professional touring theatres. The man was something of a character and was universally known by his Bengali initials Ha-ca-ha. He figured in many a story that went the round of our Jorasanko houses, and I believe cousin Gaganendranath drew a caricature of him. He has also figured in one of the stories in father's *Galpa-Salpa*. But as youngsters, far from being amused, we were duly impressed by his florid art and got busy setting up the stage. The cots were hauled in from the dormitory and Ha-ca-ha's backgrounds were solemnly hung up. Despite the crude setting, the performance was not unsuccessful. It at least helped father to pick out some promising material from amongst the amateur actors. Nayan was splendid as নক্ষত্রাণিক্য (Nakshatra-manikya). His mannerism in

the soliloquy “তুই কানে যেন তুই টিয়া পাখী” was perfect of its kind. A very gifted actor, he did not unfortunately live long enough to help father in the staging of his later plays. Jagadananda Babu, who appeared in the role of Raghupati, was of course marked out immediately as an asset. He was never spared from any performances as long as he lived.

When *Sāradsab* was produced in 1908 the character of the asrama had changed considerably. A new dormitory had been built with a spacious hall which lent itself so well for performances that it became known as the Natyaghar. It was not much of a hall, with its low ceiling ; but to us it seemed a great improvement on the dining shed. There were about a hundred students and the staff too had increased proportionately. So there were lots of people to choose from and the cast was of a much higher standard. Kshitimohan Sen, Ajit Chakravarty, Pramatha Bisi and Tapan Chatterji were valuable additions. Father himself selected the actors after putting them through hard tests. In those days he preferred to hold the rehearsals in an open place and did not mind the whole asrama looking on and listening. As a result, the rehearsals of plays and of music were of great educative value to the whole community and not to the participants only. I am sure this was the most effective method by which father was able to infect the whole asrama with the spirit of art and music. There were no regular classes for the teaching of music, and yet almost everybody could sing ; music was in the air as it has never been since. I do not wish to claim that everybody could act as well, nevertheless it is true that in a very short time father had a large assortment of talent to draw upon, whenever he wanted to produce a play. It is a pity that this open-air system of holding rehearsals had to be discarded later on when the asrama lost its homogeneity and visitors became frequent. Our students could no longer profit by watching the intensive process of training the amateur actors underwent under father's direct guidance.

Sāradsab breathed the spirit of Santiniketan and its setting



RABINDRANATH IN THE ROLE OF VALMIKI



RABINDRANATH IN THE ROLE OF JAYSIMHA

idealised the character of its surrounding landscape in the autumn. Those who performed in the play found such kinship with the parts they were rendering that they came quite natural to them. The audience, a few of whom had come from Calcutta on invitation, were charmed with the spontaneity and *joie de vivre* that characterised the acting.

Father felt greatly encouraged by the success of *Sāradotsab*, which was followed by *Prāyascitta*, *Rājā* and *Acalāyatan* in rapid succession. It became almost a custom to get up a performance at the end of each term. More and more visitors were attracted from Calcutta to come and see them. It was a problem to accommodate them. Father used to get quite excited and would worry himself over the details of the arrangements made for their comfort.

Prāyascitta is the dramatised version of the novel *Bou-thākurānir Hāt* and as such is one of father's earliest productions and yet, strangely enough, it had never before been put on the stage. The success of the performance at Santiniketan therefore greatly pleased him. This perhaps explains the somewhat odd juxtaposition of this play between *Sāradotsab* and *Acalāyatan* which belong to such an entirely different school of drama. *Prāyascitta* also happens to be one of those plays which have been remodelled several times and printed under different names.

When *Rājā* was staged in 1911, I was staying at Shelidah and could not be present. The performance was of a high order. Father had achieved the most difficult task of getting together and training a group of artists, who could not only give him able support but were infused with a common spirit. Such a happy combination rarely occurs and I know of only the Moscow Art Theatre and the Irish Theatre movements which can be compared with it. In both of these enterprises, as at Santiniketan, it was not the individual artist so much as the effect produced by the spirit that moved the whole group of actors which impressed the audience and convinced them of the sincerity of the effort and gave them complete artistic satisfaction.

In *Rājā* the audience were enthralled by the artistic nature of the performance, but there was some confusion with regard to the meaning of the play in their minds. As a matter of fact, this feeling prevailed in the literary coteries in Calcutta for several years, and the impression gathered strength that dramas written by father during this period did not conform to the prevailing literary standards, that their symbolism was confusing and, above all, that they lacked dramatic movement. Repeated performances, more than anything else, proved to be the best answer to this criticism.

Acalāyatan was staged at Santiniketan in 1914 on the occasion of a reception given to C. F. Andrews. Both *Sāradotsab* and *Acalāyatan* gave scope not only to grown-up actors but to the young pupils as well. The natural ease with which these two groups mingled on the stage was largely due to the healthy relationship that existed between the teachers and students at Santiniketan. Jagadananda Babu again scored a hit as Mahā-pancak, and so did Dinendranath, who became indispensable not only as actor but as leader of the choir. Kshitimohan Sen's appearance on the stage as Thakurda was greatly appreciated. Father had taken the part of Acarya. What gave a piquancy to the occasion was the inclusion of W. W. Pearson amongst the Sonpangsu crowd. His otherwise perfect Bengali stumbled on the words "আর খেঁসাড়ির ডাল?" and this produced a ripple of laughter amongst the audience. Father liked that foreigners who came to live at Santiniketan should share in all our activities. He took special care to find a place for them in the performances. Therefore it is not surprising that W. W. Pearson, L. K. Elmhirst, Dr. and Mrs. Harry Timbres, Haimanti Chakravarty and many others have appeared on the stage on different occasions.

The first of the series of performances which became a regular feature in the social and cultural life of Calcutta for many years was *Phālguni*. The play was first staged at Santiniketan soon after it was written in the spring of 1915. To those who heard the singing of গুণো দখিন হাওয়া by two of the youngest boys

of the asrama, every return of spring will bring back the memory of their fresh sweet voices. To harmonise with the spirit of the play, which was different in subject matter and in technique from the ordinary kind of drama, the stage-settings and the decor had necessarily to break away from the current traditions. In all the three plays—*Sāradotsab*, *Acalāyatan* and *Phālguni*—when staged at Santiniketan painted scenes had been discarded. Naturalistic settings had been introduced without any definite attempt at artistry. *Phālguni* gave a better scope to this kind of stage than the other two plays. The setting was an elaborate garden with real trees, flowers and rustic seats with a swing thrown in. Draperies came at a later stage, when attempts to introduce artistic effects became more conscious on the part of those who took up the responsibility of stage-decoration.

Towards the end of winter in the following year (1916), immediately after Māghotsab, when as usual father had conducted the divine service and Santiniketan boys had been taken down to sing in the choir, it was decided to repeat the performance of *Phālguni* in Calcutta. The dire need of helping the famine stricken people of Bankura made father hurry on with the rehearsals, so that the proceeds of the performance could be sent to the relief committee.

At that time I was staying in Calcutta carrying on the work of the Bicitra Club, and naturally the management of the performance fell on my shoulders. Santiniketan was giving a public performance for the first time. The great responsibility of such an undertaking, added to my inexperience, made me extremely nervous, particularly after the first day when the box office opened with hardly any appreciable sale of tickets. That evening I gathered together a bunch of our old boys who were then scattered in different colleges in Calcutta, and told them to spread the news to those of their friends who wanted to see the play that they must get the tickets the first thing next morning, as the house was nearly sold out. As a result, there was a gate crash on the following day and every seat was sold, although the

prices were unusually high. On the evening of the performance people paid as much as Rs. 100/- for standing-room. We were able to send Rs. 8000/- to the Relief Committee after all the expenses had been paid. Although all our subsequent public performances have been well patronised, *Phālguni*, I believe, still holds the record as far as box-office returns are concerned.

Father's creative mind could never find pleasure in repetition. Invariably he would make alterations and additions to the plays whenever they were about to be performed. Such modifications would continue till the last day of the rehearsals and even in between successive nights of the performance, much to the consternation of the actors. It would have made a most interesting collection, if all the stage-copies of the plays had been preserved.

It was therefore quite to be expected that *Phālguni* as staged in Calcutta would be different from what was performed at Santiniketan a year back. At the last moment, while the rehearsals were still going on, he wrote a prelude called "*Bairagya-Sādhana*," which required an entirely new set of actors. The reason for writing this piece of introduction was possibly his apprehension that the public might not readily understand the significance of the new style of drama he was going to present to them. It may also have been that he wished to draw upon the histrionic talents of his nephews Gaganendra, Samarendra and Abanindranath. The parts seemed to have been specially designed to suit their metier. What an ornamental and romantic background did this by-play give to the whole piece !

The stage was set up in the courtyard of our family house. Nandalal Bose and Surendranath Kar, under the guidance of Gaganendranath, helped with the scenic representations. With only a few touches of realism here and there, the setting of the stage was mainly suggestive—a definite advance on the naturalistic get-up so far attempted at Santiniketan. The scene that moved the audience most deeply was the figure of the blind Baul moving towards the dark cave singing ধীরে বন্ধু গো, ধীরে ধীরে. In 1916

father still had a resonant voice and as he disappeared behind the scenes, his voice dying away with the last words, the audience could hardly control themselves. The songs are the life of this play, and the singing on this occasion was superb, with father, Dinendranath, Ajit Chakravarty and the choir of Santiniketan boys as performers. I do not think I have ever heard Ajit Chakravarty sing so well as he did that evening, specially the song আমি যাব না গো অমনি চলে. The success of this performance in Calcutta left no doubt in father's mind as to the standard reached by the Santiniketan school of actors. Its financial possibilities had also been discovered.

There is a long gap of several years before *Phālguni* was followed by any other performance on a public stage by the Santiniketan party of actors. This was perhaps due to the demands made upon father by the Bicitra Club in Calcutta which had been started about this time, followed by his absence in Europe for a long period. In 1917 he was busy rehearsing the play *Dāk-ghar* (Post office), this time not at Santiniketan but in Calcutta. Santiniketan contributed one of its youngest students to take the part of Amal, otherwise most of the characters were selected from Calcutta and the rehearsals as well as the performances were held at the Bicitra Hall. The play (*Dāk-ghar*) is almost lyrical in quality, its mystic philosophy lies concealed in very simple and poetic language. It is short and the characters are few. No word in it is redundant and not a sentence without significance. Only true artists and accomplished actors can do justice to this play. And such a group, all of whom seemed perfectly fitted for the parts they played, was luckily found without difficulty. Father naturally chose the parts of Gaffer Watchman and Beggar for himself, and Abanindranath took the dual part of Physician and Village Headman, while Gaganendranath appeared as Madhab, Dinendranath as the Beggar's companion and Santosh Mitra as the Curd Seller. The choice of the boy Ashamukul as Amal was providential; he seemed to have been born to fill that part. The only female

character in the drama—the little playmate of Amal—was acted with perfection by Abanindranath's youngest girl. Her last plaintive call for Amal when he lay dead with the long expected letter of the postman in his hands closed the drama with a pathos that perhaps the author himself had not dared conceive as possible.

The stage was set up at one end of the Bicitra Hall, leaving enough room for only about 150 persons to make the audience. The arrangement could not have been better. Many of the delicate nuances of the play would have been lost in a less intimate atmosphere. The conception of the stage was entirely Gaganendranath's. It was novel and daring. A cottage with a real thatched roof and bamboo walls was erected by him on the stage platform. The decorations were simple but artistic as only the eye of a connoisseur could select and apply with a sure effect.

The performance was meant to be a private show for the benefit of the members of the Bicitra Club, but it was such a unique treat and people were so eager to see it that it had to be repeated several times. After every show when I wanted to pull down the stage, demand was made for another repeat performance and thus Amal's three-walled cottage remained a fixture in the Bicitra Hall for many weeks. I believe the seventh and last performance was given for the entertainment of the delegates of the Indian National Congress then being held in Calcutta. While father was occupied in producing the play for the stage, he was at the same time drawn into the political controversy that raged round the election of Annie Besant as President of the Congress. Father warmly supported her candidature against the opposition of Surendranath Banerji, whose conservatism could not brook the idea of a woman, and an English woman at that, being given this honoured position. Although father had avoided being drawn into party politics throughout his life, he could not help protesting now against this attitude towards Mrs. Besant who had only lately suffered for the cause of India. He was even prepared to be the chairman of the Reception Committee if no

one else dared take up the responsibility. At the last moment, however, Surendranath Banerji relented and Annie Besant was elected as President with Baikunthanath Sen to welcome her as the Chairman of the Reception Committee. After the session of the Congress all the distinguished members including the grand old lady-President, Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya, Mahatma Gandhi, Gokhale and Lokmanya Tilak came to see the play at our house. From the point of view of dramatic representation, I can unhesitatingly say that no other play so far attempted ever gave such complete satisfaction to the author, the producers, actors and the audience. The combination of histrionic art and stagecraft had for once reached an acme of perfection.

ZEB-UL-NISA BEGUM & DIWAN-I-MAKHFI

By BIKRAMA JIT HASRAT

THE HISTORY of Zeb-ul-Nisa Begum (1638-1702), the eldest daughter of Aurangzeb 'Ālamgîr, as told by most of the biographers, both contemporary and modern, is a queer narrative of fact and fiction, scandal and legend. She is described as a cultured poetess who wrote obscene verse, a patroness of men of letters who is the author of a fictitious *Dîwān*, a religious-minded lady involved in clandestine love affairs at the same time with a governor of Lahore and a Marhatta chieftain, and a beautiful Juliet extemporising responsive lyrics, from the royal balcony, to many an imaginary Romeo. But beneath these misleading tales of romance and scandal, the true picture of her intellectual attainments, her devotion to the advancement of art and letters, and her self-less life of piety, culture and refinement lies hidden. Neither the court-historians of the time, nor more recent biographers have done adequate justice to her. Of the former the *Ma'āthir-ul-'Umara*, the *Ma'āthir-i-'Ālamgîrî*, the *Yad-i-Baiḍa*, the *Sarv-i-Āẓād* and the *Khaṣṣāna-i-'Āmara* are not much informative; the contemporary European travellers like Bernier and Manucci only give her a passing notice; while the latter, among whom the *Durr-i-Maktūm*, a *chronique scandaleuse* on the life of the princess by one Ahmad-ud-Din and the *Hayāt-i-Zeb-ul-Nisa*, a prototype of the former, though in certain respects deal with her life fully, have nonetheless, woven a web of imaginative tales of scandal, love and intrigue. And finally, the so-called *Dîwān* of Zeb-ul-Nisa, a useless effort by Mrs. Westbrooke in rendering into English a work of the princess which is not her own,¹ and in giving the final touch of real romance, in her neatly written introduction, to the unfounded

1. *Dîwān of Zeb-ul-Nisa*, translated into English with an Introduction (Wisdom of the East Series), by Mrs. Westbrooke, London, 1918.

gossips narrated by her predecessors. All these tales, narrated with the genuine sincerity of a historian, have stirred our imagination, and in our moments of enjoyment we have forgotten to trace their origin and to doubt their genuineness.

Zeb-ul-Nisa Begum was an accomplished princess, well-read both in Arabic and Persian. During her childhood, Hāfiza Mariyam,² a pious and cultured lady taught her the *Qurān*, which she committed to heart at the age of eight, and for which accomplishment her father gave her a reward of thirty-thousand gold pieces.³ Mullāh Jīwan was her teacher till the age of twenty-one, and after that, Mullāh Ashraf Māzandrānī was commanded by Aurangzeb to take charge of her education.⁴ The latter was a reputed scholar, very skilful in writing chronograms (*tārīkh*) and Zeb-ul-Nisa always sought his advice in her prose and poetical compositions.⁵ She is described also as an accomplished calligraphist, her tutor being Mirza Muhammad Jawān son of Hājī Qāsim Khaṭṭāṭ, and could write with neatness and grace the different styles of calligraphy— *Nasta'liq*, *Naskh* and *Shikasta*. Mullāh Riḍa Rāshid gives a very eulogistic description of her skill in this art.⁶ Notwithstanding Aurangzeb's dislike of the poets whom he dubbed as "lying flatterers" and their poetry as "vain babblings,"⁷ and his inherent aversion

2. She was the mother of 'Ināyat Khān, one of the 'Umara of Aurangzeb, *vide* the *Ma'āthir-ul-'Umara* (Bib. Ind.), Vol. II, p. 670.

3. *Ma'āthir-i-'Ālamgiri*, p. 888.

4. *Vide* notice on the life of Mullāh Ashraf in the *Saru-i-Āsād*, by Ghulām 'Alī.

5. *Maqālāt-i-Shiblī*, (Vol. V, p. 108) also gives details of his life. He was the grandson of Mullāh Sa'id Taqī Majlisī and came to India from Iran during the early period of Aurangzeb's reign. He was himself a poet and a distinguished scholar, who continued to be Zeb-ul-Nisa's tutor for about 14 years. Ghulām 'Alī, the author of the *Saru-i-Āsād* observes that he has seen his Diwān. For details and specimen of his poetry, see also the *Ma'ārif*, Vol. XII, 6. (1928).

6. *Zeb-ul-Nisa Begum aur uska muratab karda Muragga'* : the *Shama'* Vol. VI. 2.

7. *Studies in Mughal India*. (Cal.), p. 79. The statement might have a ring of truth in it, but I very much doubt that Aurangzeb really detested poetry. He is said to have ordained the discontinuance of the teaching of the *Diwān-i-Hāfi* in the *maktabs*, but his conception of the poetic art was both pure and noble ; what he could not stand was its cheap professional deterioration. It is recorded that he discouraged even un-official

towards all aesthetic arts, Zeb-ul-Nisa's efforts for the advancement of the arts and sciences counterbalanced the forcible suppression of intellectual and artistic movements ; her patronage of men of letters, mostly poets dismissed by her father, and her active interest in music and painting, produced a more cheerful atmosphere in an era of intellectual sterility, which followed the accession of her father. The *Muraqqa'* of Zeb-ul-Nisa or an Album of Paintings, whose preface, written in mixed prose and poetry by Mullāh Riḍa Rāshid, and still preserved in the Khuda Bakhsh Khān Library in Bankipur, is by far the most revealing document in this respect. Allowing its author a latitude of poetical exaggeration and overlooking its ornate verbosity, which is most annoying to a student of history, we can discover a thread through the labyrinth. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of its statements. It speaks of Zeb-ul-Nisa's patronage of poets and calligraphists and observes that she had a galaxy of scholars and theologians attached to her 'court', which is appropriately called the *Bait-ul-'Ulūm* or an Academy of Sciences. Here the most learned men of the time discussed various sciences, viz., grammar, rhetoric, etymology, mathematics, astronomy, astrology, the study of perspective (*marāya*) and mysticism. This fact is further substantiated by the author of *Mir'āt-ul-'Ālam*,⁸ who observes that theologians, doctors, scholars, poets, scribes and calligraphists were engaged in work at her

court-poets and characterised their panegyrics as wasteful. At the same time, he occasionally wrote verse and on his accession to the throne wrote his own *sikka* :

"Sikka zad dar jahān chu badr-i-munir,
Shah-i-Aurangzeb 'Ālamgir."

It is also recorded that he always kept the *Diwān* of Hāfiz and the *Gulistān* of Sa'di by his bed-side, and his reply to some of his intimate courtiers for his inconsistency was, that the commonalty was often stupidly carried away by the figurative use of *mai* (wine), *samā'* (music), and *nigār* (beloved) and could not understand their real mystic import. Similarly, the incident of the "burial of music", so loudly trumpeted by various historians to show his religious and temperamental coarseness, can also be interpreted in the sense that music is a vehicle of the expression of a higher mystical state by the *Sufis* rather than a means for the gratification of physical or aesthetic sense.

8. *Vide* the notice on the life of Zeb-ul-Nissa in the work.

command. All of them were maintained and supported by her generous bounty. Mullāh Riḍa Rāshid also adds, that she was well-versed in the art of music and understood various musical notes.⁹

The Academy of Sciences also served the purpose of translation and research. A large number of works were written at her instance and dedicated to her. The most outstanding among the numerous works produced, was the Persian translation of Imām Rāzī's monumental *Tafsīr* by Mullāh Ṣafī-ud-Dīn Ardbelī, entitled the *Zeb-ut-Tafsīr*, a work which till lately had been supposed as her own. To this Academy was attached a library, "unique in its collection of valuable books"¹⁰ which "none had seen before."¹¹ Nearly all the theological, scientific and other works, written by her protégés bear the first half of her name (*Zeb*) and this has led many writers to assume that she was a prolific writer. In spite of her great literary genius, her love of art and letters, her patronage of men of learning, it is doubtful if she wrote any substantial work of her own. A slight reference is made in various *Tadhkaras* to her two genuine works, but neither of these has survived. The first of these, the *Zeb-ul-Munshāt*, a collection of her letters, mentioned in the *Makbẖan-ul-Gharā'ib*,¹² has actually been seen by its author, Ahmed Ali Sindelvi. What has been left of her correspondence, so far as I know, is a fragment recorded in the *Tadhkara Riāḍ-ul-Afkār*¹³ and one other letter in the original, in the Victoria Memorial Hall, Calcutta.

Her second work is the *Biāḍ-i-Zib-ul-Nissa*, generally accepted as the collection of her poetical compositions, or it might be, an anthology or a diary. The *Biāḍ*, according to the *Majma'ul-Gharā'ib*, unfortunately perished in a reservoir through the negli-

9. This statement may or may not be true. See *supra*, my footnote on Aurangzeb's attitude towards poetry and music.

10. *Ma'āthir-i-'Ālamgiri*, p. 889.

11. *Mir'āt-ul-'Ālam*, opt. cit.

12. *Vide*. *Tadhkara-i-Zeb-ul-Nissa* in the work.

13. Compiled by Wazīr 'Alī 'Ibratī 'Aẓīmābādī.

gence of a maid, whose name is given as Irādat Fahim. The loss was a great shock to her, and her teacher Mullāh Ashraf Māzan-drāni is said to have consoled her by a *Qita'*, which he wrote on the occasion, in order to beseech forgiveness for the maid.¹⁴ The same work refers to her Dīwān in this manner : "I have never seen her Dīwān, but in one of the memoirs I have read a selection of her verses. These to me appear spurious, for the compiler has attributed to her many verses of other poets."¹⁵ The *Yad-i-Baiḍa* of Ghulām 'Ali Āzād has quoted only two verses of Zeb-ul-Nisa (not of *Makhfi*) with the remark that "he had heard these to be of her composition." Most of the other chroniclers repeat these two verses with many others, depicting her ready wit at improvisation. And now we come to the *Dīwān-i-Makhfi*.

The *Dīwān-i-Makhfi* is generally ascribed to Zeb-ul-Nisa Begum, by most Orientalists like Rieu,¹⁶ Sprenger¹⁷ and Ross,¹⁸ who admit that she had adopted the pen-name of *Makhfi*. While in the Āshifiya Library catalogue there is some doubt in the mind of the compiler to accept the Dīwān in *toto* as genuine, he suggests however the possibility that the Dīwān might be a combination of the poetry of both *Makhfi* Rashtī and Zeb-ul-Nisa¹⁹—which suggestion is not much convincing either ; and Shibli²⁰ in his charming essay on Zab-ul-Nisa has not touched the subject adequately. Only K. S. Abdul Muqtadir has expressed

14. The ful *qita'* (fragment) is quoted in connection with the life of Mullāh Ashraf by Ahmad 'Ali Sindelvi, but none of its score and odd verses, indicate even slightly that the *Biḍā* was the *Dīwān* of Zeb-ul-Nisa. It is variously described as "a be-jewelled tray of pearls," "resplendent with jems of words," "sparkling rubies from the mine," "the ocean of whose verses is ever in commotion anew" etc.

15. *Vide.* also *Maqālāt-i-Shibli*, *opt. cit.*

16. *Catalogue of Persian MSS. in the British Museum*, Vol. II, p. 702, where two MSS. of the *Dīwān* (Or. 811 and Add. 25826) are noticed by Dr. Rieu with the observation that "*Makhfi* is the poetical name of Zeb-ul-Nisa."

17. *Catalogue of Persian MSS.* p. 480.

18. Dr. Ross Collection in the *R. A. S. B. Cat.* p. 115.

19. Vol. I. 788 (Hyderabad-Deccan).

20. *Maqālāt-i-Shibli*, Vol. V.

his doubt in accepting the Bankipur MS. of the Dīwān as a genuine composition of the princess.²¹

While the pen-name of *Makhfi* was adopted by many poetesses, notable among them a wife of Akbar²² and Nūr Jahān,²³ there is not the slightest evidence to establish that Zeb-ul-Nisa had a similar *nom de plume*. Most of the contemporary writers are silent on this point and none of the histories and *Tadhkaras*, like the *Ma'āthir-i-Ālamgīrī*, the *Mir'āt-ul-Ālam*, the *Mir'āt-ul-Khayāl*, the *Kalamāt-ul-Shu'ra* etc. give her the name of *Makhfi*. Her poetical compositions, referred to above, are simply called the *Biqd-i-Zeb-ul-Nisa* in the *Majma'-ul-Gharā'ib*, and in nearly all biographies, which give an account of her life and poetical merits, she is styled as: name—Zebanda, with the *laqab* of Zeb-ul-Nissa. Even the preface to the *Muraqqa'*, which is otherwise so eulogistic in the description of her poetical attainments, does not give her the *nom de plume* of *Makhfi*. And finally there is the following *maqta'* of her ghazal in the *Miftāb-ul-Tawārīkh* :²⁴

A king's daughter though, I have set my heart on poverty,

I have discarded Zeb and Zinat ; my name is Zeb-ul-Nisa.

This fact is further confirmed by the author of the *Tadhkarat-ul-Khawātin*, who says :²⁵ "What is generally known about her *nom de plume* being *Makhfi*, is absolutely incorrect. *Makhfi* was a poet in her service (?) and his Dīwān has been generally attributed to her."

II

The essentially conventional character of Persian poetry, dating back to the 10th or 11th century, within its narrow limits

21. *Catalogue of Arabic and Persian MSS. in the Oriental Public Library*, Vol. III, p. 250.

22. *Ma'āthir-ul-'Umara*, p. 588.

23. *Tadhkarat-ul-Khawātin-i-Hind* (Lucknow). p. 272, gives a very interesting account of her poetical accomplishments and a selection of her verses.

24. Compiled by Beale, (Agra, 1849), 488, which incidentally gives a genuine ghazal and a quatrain of Zeb-ul-Nisa." The closing verse (*maqta'*) of the former is given above, the *maṭla'* being :

"Gar chi man Leila asās-am dil chu Majnūn dar nawā-st,
Sar ba ṣāḥra me-zadam lekin ḥaya zanjir-i-pā-st."

25. *Opt. cit.*

of fixed verse-forms, metres and rhymes, its permissible imagery, figures of speech and rhetorical embellishments has not changed materially ; and until recently, due mostly to the post-revolution nationalistic forces, the Persian lyric had a uniform sequence of subject with the old classical tradition. This makes extremely difficult, if not impossible, for a critic to distinguish off-hand, from the style and subject matter, a ghazal written in the early 10th century from that of the 19th century. Where the identity of the author is doubtful, the *takhallus* of the poet, invariably given in the closing verse (*maqta'*) of a ghāzal becomes, more or less, a matter of speculation. Nonetheless, it is sometimes possible to get some information about the poet's life from the stray allusions in some of the verses, which might establish the authorship of a *Dīwān*.

The *Dīwān-i-Makhfi*,²⁶ usually ascribed to Zeb-ul-Nisa Begum, is seemingly not much different from the average lyrical Persian poetry of the 17th century. The quality of its *ghazals*, *qaṣīdas* and *rubā'īs*, is second-rate, when compared with the masterly exquisite poems of Faiḍī, Ṣā'ib, 'Urfī, Kalīm and some other poets of the period. It contains 487 ghazals, a score of quatrains and fragments, and approximately the same number of panegyrics and Composite-ties (*tarkīb-bands*). To these may be added a few "tell-tale" verses of Zeb-ul-Nisa, which beyond doubt are a later addition. A more searching examination of its contents shows that it lacks entirely the graceful touch of a feminine hand and the unconscious under-current of modest trend of thought, bound to pervade beneath the surface of the love-lyrics of a Muslim princess. Its verses have no emotional restraint and are traditionally outspoken in their limited sphere of aspiration,

26. The *Dīwān* is not scarce. It has been lithographed twice in Cawnpore (A. H. 1268) and Lucknow (A. H. 1284) and rendered into English in an abridged form by Mrs. Westbrooke (London, 1918). Excellent MS. copies are available in nearly all Indian and most of the European libraries. All quotations given in this paper are from a MS. (No. 78), foll. 191, *Nasta'liq*, transcribed 15th of Safar, A. H. 1260, in the Department of Islamic Studies, Santiniketan.

union and separation. Its drinking-bouts are riotous, its love-unions unabashed, and its endurance of separation-pangs too virile. In some of the panegyrics, the attitude of the poetess (?) is not princely but beggarly. Some of its verses reek of vulgar tastes, low ambitions and repulsive appetites. From a mere psychological point of view, it betrays many characteristics peculiar only to a man.

As a matter of fact, so far as I have been able to read between its lines, the *Dîwān-i-Makhfi* is the composition of Mullāh Makhfi of Rasht (a town in Gīlān), who was at the court of Imām Quli Khān, ruler of Fārs. After the latter's death in A. H. 1043, he came to India to win for himself a place among the court-poets of Shāh Jahān. Some details of his life and career are given in the *Majma'-ul-Nafā'is*, *Tadhbikara-i-Taqī Anwādī*, the *Riāḍ-ul-Shu'ra* and the *Ātishkadāh*, which also give a varied selection of his verses, all found in the *Dîwān-i-Makhfi*. Even the internal evidence of the *Dîwān* establishes the author to be a native of Khorasān, whom circumstances drove to the court of Shāh Jahān. "I am 'Bū Ali (Ibn-i-Sīna)," he says,²⁷ "who have come all the way from Khorasān. My needs have driven me to the court of the Sultan (Shāh Jahān)." It is evident from some of the verses, that even in India, he did not see better days. He is discontented, restless and disgruntled at the treatment meted out to him: "My eyes mourn while my mind remembers my native land."²⁸ He wonders that the "parrot of his mind should have come for sugar from *Riḍwān* (i. e. his native place) to the darkness of Indian soil."²⁹ He considers Khorasān as his Greece, and

27. *Fol.* 176b., v. 8 :

Bū 'Ali i rūzgār-am az Khorasān āmda,
Az pai 'ighrād bar dargāh i Sulṭān āmda.

28. *Ibid.* v. 4 :

Bas ki bar yād i waṭan ba dīdah mātam dāsh^htam.

29. *Ibid.* v. 5

Hairti dāram ki yā rab chūn dar-īn gulmāt i Hind,
Ṭūṭi i ṭaba'-am pai shakar z' riḍwān āmdā.

observes, that his woeful mind, a replica of Aristotle in art, is lying (in waste) in India.⁸⁰ He complains of the niggardly treatment meted out to him by his Muslim compatriots, who have shown him scanty love and hospitality. "O Lord, where is (Thy) fear, and what has become of the true Muslim spirit?"⁸¹ He is so poor that the "shivering gloom" has overpowered him, for he has no winter raiment.⁸² For all these reasons he is desirous of going back to his own country,⁸³ for, "in this world, talent does not do good to any one, and Christ's ass is considered accomplished if it carries a sack full of Gold."⁸⁴ India is the subject of his immense dislike and scorn, and "he would prefer to live in the ruins of Persepolis, even if he were to dream of the sorrows and afflictions of India."⁸⁵ And he laments, "How long would India eat my liver away? Where is the miraculous attractive quality of thine Iraq?"⁸⁶ And again he consoles himself on his failure in India: "I am the Rustam of time and space," he says, "my prey does not lie in an Indian bush."⁸⁷ There are numerous verses expressive of his utter

80. Fol. 154a., v. 1 :

Dil i āshufta i *Makhfi* ba fan i khud Aristū ast,
Ba Hind uftāda ast amma Khorasān-ast Yūnān-ash.

81. Fol. 168b. v. 9 :

Z' mihr o ghafqat i Islāmīān niḡhān na-mānd,
Kujā-st tars Khudāyā chi shud Mussalmāni ?

82. Fol. 168 b. v. 8 :

Girifta larza i afsurdgī mara chi-kunam ?
Ki nist dar bar i man jāma'i zamistāni.

83. Fol. 51 a., v. 8 :

Makhfiyā chand ba-dil ḡasrat i didār i waṭan ?
'Anqarib-ast ki dar khāk i qiyāmat waṭan ast.

84. Fol. 80 a. v. 11 :

Ba kār i kas namī-āyad hunar *Makhfi* dar-in 'ālam,
Khar i 'Isa hunar-mand ast, agar dar kisa zar dārad.

85. Fol. 161 a. v. 6 :

Tu az mulk i Khorasāni, ba Aṣṭarakh waṭan sāzi,
Ba khwāb i shab agar dard o ḡham i Hindūstān bini.

86. Fol. 188 b. v. 1 :

Tā kai jigar mara khurad Hind ?
Kū jadhbā'i mu'jiz i Irāq-at ?

87. Fol. 184b. v. 11 :

Mā Rustam i waqt o rūzgār-aim,
Dar besha'i Hind shikār i mā nist.

disgust of the land where he has come all the way from Khorasān : "In Indian whirlpool it is useless to seek the pearls of desires" ; here "time is an enemy, fate is downcast and people mean" ;⁸⁸ and in another verse ; "O *Makhfi*, for how long would you sustain afflictions by staying on in India ? Your precious life is being wasted here, so make a move to some other place."⁸⁹

Such instances are numerous in the *Dīwān*. It seems that he has left his family behind, and he remembers his son : "O *Makhfi*, it is not only your heart heavy with separation ; every father suffers for re-union with his son."⁴⁰ Poverty, ill treatment and scanty recognition of his poetry, produce in him a cynical attitude towards life and its environments. He recedes into the easily accessible corner of contentment : "O *Makhfi* covet not the king's robes of satin, so long as you possess the old patched cloak of a Mullāh."⁴¹ And "O *Makhfi*, since fortune does not make things easier, I have chosen the retreat of contentment."⁴² And this verse : "O *Makhfi*, have no fear about your livelihood, for your ordained lot would reach you sooner or later."⁴³

Verses indicating the dire poverty and utter misery of the author of the *Dīwān-i-Makhfi* are numerous. His panegyrics are more expressive of his personal affairs. Briefly they speak of three things : first, his pitiable plight and constant supplications to the king ; secondly, his imprisonment and thirdly, his

88. Fol. 91a. v. 8 and fol. 110b. v. 7.

89. *Ibid* : *Makhfi* ba-gham tā kai tawān burdan sare dar mulk i Hind ?

'Umr i azīs az dast raft, 'zin jā ba-sho jā'i digar.

40. Fol. 58a. v. 8 : *Makhfi* na hamīn bar dil i tu bār i firāq-ast,
Har jā pidre hast firāq i pisare hast.

41. Fol. 84b. v. 8 : *Makhfi* ma-kun tama' dar atlas i shāh,
Tura tā kuhna dalq i Mullā'i hast.

42. Fol. 97b. v. 11. *Makhfi* man o gosha'i qanā'at,
Chun bakht ba-kār i mā na-dārad.

43. Fol. 90a. v. 4 : Bahr i rozi ma-kun andesha ki *Makhfi* ākhir,
Rizq i maqsūm rasad, gar-chi pas o pesh rasad.

pilgrimage to Mecca. The poverty-stricken and commiserable poet gives vent to his feelings freely in one of his panegyrics entitled : "On Some of My Personal Affairs",⁴⁴ where he describes himself as "withered like an autumn leaf", "submerged under the deluge of affliction", "empty-handed, empty-bellied", "a sick man's groan, all pain and sorrow", "a flame of sighs", and "one who cannot escape Satan's dictates." At the same time, he beseeches the king's attention and pleads that his poetical genius awaits his equity, justice and kindness. He also speaks of his foes who have maligned him, of the days of his imprisonment, the darkness of his cell, and his despair of being set at liberty till the day of Resurrection. In two of his *tarkīb-bands*, entitled : "*Euology of the Prophet and Ascension*,"⁴⁵ he narrates his visit to Mecca. In the first, he laments that "for years he wept like the cloud, in the desire of (kissing) the door of the Arabian Apostle,"⁴⁶ but poverty, helplessness and destitution stood in his way.⁴⁷ Being provisionless he kept his faith in the Prophet's generosity,⁴⁸ till at last, he managed to scrape some passage-money (*zād-i-rāb*).⁴⁹ In the second, he admits the realisation of his heart's desires and gives a description of his visit to Mecca,⁵⁰ and of the vicissitudes on his return journey.⁵¹

44. *Qasida dar biyān i ba'd-i hālāt i khud* : (No 9., *Foll.* 168a-164b.)

45. *Foll.* 171 and 174.

46. *Ibid.*, v. 8 : Yā Rasūl i 'Arabī jadhbā i shauqī ki chūn abr,
Sālḥā shud ba tamānā'i-darat giriyān-am.

47. *Ibid.*, v. 9 : Nist mumkin ki ba maqṣūd rasam be kashish-at,
Mufliṣ o 'ājiz o dar-mānda o be-sāmān-am.

48. *Ibid.* Nist gar zād-i-rahe ṣabr o taḥammul dāram,
Takya bar luṭf i tu wa faid i tawakkul dāram.

49. *Ibid.*, v. 18 : Zād-i-rāham shuda akhīr Shāh i Baṭḥā madadī,
Ki z' alṭāf i tu bar khwān i ṣalā'i ba-rasam.

50. *Ibid.* Aye muqimān i ḥaram bahr i Khuda yak naẓarī,
Khānān pālān shuda az safare mi āyad.

And : Chashm i rūḥ-am rā z' nūr i Ka'aba binā karda-and,
Ka'aba ra bahr i munājāt-am mubaiyā karda-and.

51. *Ibid.* Bāz gashtan chun dar-in rāh-am sar o sāmān na-būd,
Langar i kashtī'i man, juz mauja'i tūfān na-būd.

III

And now for the scandals and tell-tale verses of Zeb-ul-Nisa. These are as numerous as varied, the *scandalum magnatum* being the love-affair of 'Āqil Khān and Zeb-ul-Nisa. This has been told in its most colourful form by her two biographers and Mrs. Westbrooke. 'Āqil Khān, the governor of Lahore heard Zeb-ul-Nisa's verses and fell in love with her. During Aurangzeb's stay at Lahore in 1662 A. D., on his way to Kashmir, Zeb-ul-Nisa who accompanied her father, met him for the first time in a most romantic manner. 'Āqil Khān, smitten with intense love, rode round the royal palace to catch a glimpse of her. This he did, and saw the princess, clad in green robes (some say, in a robe of *gul-i-anār* or the colour of a pomegranate flower), and falling in a poetic mood exclaimed: "A vision in green appears on the roof of the palace."⁵² The princess understood and answered: "Neither supplication, nor gold nor force can win her."⁵³ The second meeting between the lovers took place under a marble pavilion, where the heroic lover, disguised as a mason and carrying a load on his head, managed to enter the palace. Again 'Āqil Khān had poetic inspiration and he extemporised a line: "In my longings for thee, I have become as the dust wandering round the earth." The princess, surrounded as she stood by her retinue, recognised him and completed the couplet: "Even if thou hast become as the wind, thou shouldst not touch a tress of my hair."

Thereafter they grew very intimate and met secretly, till the rumour reached the ears of Aurangzeb, who had gone back to Delhi. The enraged father hastened back to Lahore, and finding the matter beyond control, sought to hush up the whole affair by nuptial ties. But the chicken-hearted lover backed out and tendered his resignation. Fearful of the Emperor's revenge he

52. Sabz poshe ba lab-e bām naẓar mi-āyad.

53. Na ba sārī na ba zore na ba zar mi-āyad.

wrote to the princess : "Why should a wise man ('Āqil) do a thing, which he might regret ?"⁵⁴ But soon afterwards his love proved stronger than his fear and he came secretly to Delhi to continue his interrupted love affair. Again they met in Zeb-ul-Nisa's apartments inside the fort, but one of the guards noticed him and reported the matter to Aurangzeb, who came to her daughter's apartments unannounced. The princess, taken unawares, concealed her lover in a cauldron. The Emperor divined the hiding place and ordered his attendants to heat the "water" in the cauldron for a bath. The princess, when the cauldron was placed on an oven, went near and whispered softly a verse imploring him to save her reputation. The lover assured her but protested ; with a sigh he read this verse :⁵⁵

"Even after my death, were I to remember your mercilessness,
My hands would shoot out of the coffin and I would be wailful."

So the lover died and afterwards Zeb-ul-Nisa was imprisoned in the fortress of Salimgarh.

There is no need for us to refute this legend, as the historical background of this slanderous *fanticcini* has been most admirably exploded by Sir Jadunath Sarkar,⁵⁶ who has also discredited a similar story, which depicts the princess in love with Shivaji Marhatta, who was imprisoned by Aurangzeb in 1666. This story is the product of one Bhudev, who may have relied upon some legend. It provides delightful reading, with lovers exchanging rings and parting in love and pathos. "But it is a fiction and nothing more," says Sir Jadunath.⁵⁷ "Not to speak of the Persian histories of the time, no Marhatti life of Shivaji mentions that a Mughal princess interested herself in the fate of the captive chieftain in her father's capital. None of

54. Chira kēre kunad 'Āqil ki bēz āyad pashimāni.

55. Bād i murdan z' jafā'i tu agar yād kunam,
Az kafan dast birūn āram o faryād kunam.

56. *Studies in Mughal India*, p. 79-90 ; also the *Modern Review*, January 1916, p. 88-86.

57. *Ibid.*

them gives the smallest hint of the champion of Hindu revival having coquetted with a Muslim sweetheart in the enemy's den. Zeb-ul-Nisa's aesthetic sense, too, would have saved her from throwing her heart away to a rugged and illiterate Deccani. The whole story is not only unhistoric but improbable."

The *Hayāt-i-Zeb-ul-Nisa* records that once an Iranian prince, who was also a poet, fell in love with the princess and sent her the following verse :

"O moon-foreheaded one, unveiled I desire to behold thee !
The loveliness of thine beauty, I cherish to approach."⁵⁸

The reply from the princess came promptly on the following day :

"If it were to see me in the garden, the nightingale would woo
not the rose.
If he were to behold me, how would the Brahman worship his idols ?
Like fragrance in rose's petals, I lie enshrined in my verses,
Whosoever desireth to meet me, he would find me in my poems."⁵⁹

The ready wit and elegance of thought is so uncommonly poetic, that most of the critics have accepted it without a doubt of its genuineness. In the *Dīwan* (fol. 148b),⁶⁰ oddly, the alleged verse of the Iranian prince is missing, though the "reply-verses" are recorded without any comment. But the exhilarating effect of this charming anecdote, gives way to our disillusionment, when we find the reply-verses of the princess, as recorded in the *Tadhkara-i-Sarkhush*,⁶¹ to be the original composition of Hakīm Ṣādiq, a courtier-poet of Shāh Jahān. Apart from the reliability of the *Tadhkara*, which is generally regarded as authentic, the

58. Tura aye mah-jabīn be-pardah didan ʿarzū dāram,
Jamāl-at-hā'i ḥusan-at rā rasidan ʿarzū dāram.

59. Bulbul az gul bu-gzrad gar dar chaman binād mara,
But-parastī kai kunad gar Barhman benad mara ?
Dar saḥḥun pinhān shudam mānind i bū dar barg i gul,
Har ki didan mēl dārad dar saḥḥun binād mara.

60. Also the published *Dīwān* (Nawāl Kishore, Lucknow), p. 169, gives only the reply verses.

61. *Opt. cit.* Notice on the life of Hakīm Ṣādiq.

verses are indisputably established to be of Hakîm Şâdiq, for a wordy squabble ensuing out of these verses is also narrated, at the same place, between the poet and Mullâh Shaidâ.

Another example of a similar kind is refuted by Shiblî.⁶² Once Zeb-ul-Nisa composed this hemistich, but could not successfully complete the couplet : "For this reason sweatness parts not from my lips."⁶³ She is said to have sent this line to poet Nâsir 'Ali, who improvised the second hemistich and sent it over to her : "Perhaps my lips touch Zeb-ul-Nisa's lips."⁶⁴ All this of course is nonsense. "Anyone with a slight knowledge of the Timurid grandeur, discipline and etiquette," observes Shiblî, "can well imagine that poor Nâsir 'Ali would not dare such impertinence even in his dreams." The notorious writer of the *Hayât*, to make the story more credible, shows the princess' wrath at the insolence of the poet, and records that she sent to him the following verse in reply :

"O Nâsir 'Ali, with 'Ali's name thou art shielded,
Else with the sword of 'Ali (*Dhu'l faqār*), thy head would have
been severed."⁶⁵

The *Makbẓan-ul-Gharā'ib*⁶⁶ quotes this *gita'* of Zeb-ul-Nisa :

"That arm be broken, which enircles not the friend's neck,
That eye be blinded, which sees not the sweetheart's face.
Many a spring has ended, and every rose has found a place on
a head,
"But the rose (bud) of my mind's orchard embellishes not a
turban."⁶⁷

62. *Maqālāt-i-Shiblî*, Vol. V. p. 117. Nearly all the Tadhkaras repeat this incident, without any comment. There are some, however, who think it improbable.

63. Azham nami shawad z' ḥalāwat juda lab-am.

64. Shāyad rasid bar lab i Zeb-ul-Nisa lab-am.

65. Nâsir 'Ali, ba-nām-i-'Ali burda'i panāh,
Warna ba Dhu'lfaqār-i-'Ali sar buridam-at.

66. *Opt. cit.* notice on Zeb-ul-Nisa.

67. Bi-shkanad daste ki kham dar gardan i yāre na-shud,
Kūr an qhashme ki lazzat gir i didāre na-shud.
Sad bahār akhīr shud o har gul ba- farqe jā garift,
Ghuncha'i baḡh i dil i man zeb i dastare na-shud.

Now, whatever the ideas contained in the above *gita*, it is unanimously admitted by all biographers to be of Zeb-ul-Nisa. Though the Lucknow edition of the *Dīwan* omits it, the *Miftāh-ul-Tawārīkh*,⁶⁸ the single work to record a few of the genuine verses of Zeb-ul-Nisa, does not leave it out. But the MS. copy of the *Dīwan*, (fol. 149a) whose compiler, perhaps, possesses some originality, improves upon it. "The following hemistich," it adds, "was improvised by Khān Khānān, on hearing the above *gita* :

"Zeb-ul-Nisa grew an old maid but found no suitor !"⁶⁹

Here is another example from the *Dīwān-i-Makhfi* (fol. 150 a). Zeb-ul-Nisa composed the following unit (*fard*) :

"Four things relieve my mind of sadness—which four ?

Wine, green orchard, running stream and a ruby-coloured

sweetheart !"⁷⁰

It adds that the Shadow of God (Aurangzeb), having heard this verse asked her : "What verse was that ? Say it again." At this "the young sapling of the garden of perfection" (Zeb-ul-Nisa), without any hesitation, changed the second line and read the unit thus :

"Four things relieve my mind of sadness—which four ?

Prayers, fast, rosary and repentance."⁷¹

A considerable number of such improvisations—verses, fragments and quatrains, some vulgar and unprintable, others

68. Beale (Agra, 1849), p. 488.

69. Pir shud Zeb-ul-Nisa ū rā kharīdāre na-shud.

'Abdur Raḥīm Khān Khānān son of Bairam Khān, a noble and commander of Mughal forces in many expeditions, was himself a poet and extended his patronage to men of letters (for details of his life, *vide* the *Ma'āthir-ul-'Umara*, Vol. 1. p. 698-718.) The above mentioned anecdote is not only improbable, but also historically incorrect, for, Khān Khānān had died (A. H. 1086), before Zeb-ul-Nisa was born (A. H. 1048).

70. Chahār chiz s' dil gham burad, kudām chahār ?

Sharāb o sabzah o sb i rawān o la'li nigār.

71. The improvised second line reads :

Nimās o rosāh o tasbīḥ o istighfār.

indicative of rare poetical merit, are recorded in various works : a verse she wrote on seeing a goat in labour, about to give birth to a kid⁷² ; a quatrain in reply to poet Ni'mat Khān 'Ālī's demand for the price of a crown set in pearls⁷³ ; a virtuous rebuff to a verse of 'Āqil Khān Rāḍī's⁷⁴ ; completing two couplets, whose first lines were sent by the Shah of Iran⁷⁵ ; and an unpremeditated line of real merit when a rare Chinese mirror was broken.⁷⁶ The last mentioned is worth recording. Once a maid broke a rare old mirror, a precious gift of the Chinese Emperor to her grandfather Shāh Jahān. Struck with terror at what she had done, the maid came in tears before the princess and exclaimed : "The Fate has broken the Chinese mirror."⁷⁷ The princess, who was in a poetic mood, smiled and said, "Well done ! the instrument of egoism is smashed."⁷⁸

72. *Tadhkarāt ul Khwātīn*, (Lucknow), p. 221.

73. *Sawānīḥ Zeb-ul-Nisa*, (Agra), p. 28.

74. *Khasāna-i-'Āmirā*, also Shibli in his *Maqālāt*. Vol. V. p. 114.

75. *Diwān-i-Makhlūf* (MS.), fol. 189a.

76. *Sawānīḥ*, p. 86.

77. *As qaḍā' ā'ina'ī chini shikast*,

78. *Khūb shud asbāb i khud bini shikast*.

TALES OF FOUR FRIENDS

BY

PRAMATHA CHAUDHURI

TRANSLATED BY

INDIRA DEVI CHAUDHURANI

INTRODUCTION

SRI PRAMATHA CHAUDHURI, whose place in the history of Bengali literature is assured, is still unfortunately outside the focus of India's attention. But with Rabindranath and Sarat Chandra he has moulded modern Bengali prose by giving it new contents and form. Birbal, his pen-name, is the originator of the Birbali style, the greatest *coup* of which consisted in persuading Tagore to adopt it about five years after the receipt of the Nobel award. With the shedding of earlier formalities and semi-Sanskritic affiliations of the Pandits of Fort William,—inheritances that had passed from Vidyasagar to Bankim and from Bankim to Tagore, each modifying in his own way,—Bengali language, in the hands of Birbal and in the pages of *Sabuj Patra*, which he edited, regained its pristine vigour of the dialect and acquired a directness and plasticity more suited to the needs of modern thought and expression. No longer is the language of Bengal's literature generically distinct from the spoken tongue of her cultured people ; though a few would fain keep it so, in the name of dignity and music. The longer time taken by other countries—and free countries at that—to bridge that gulf, is a true measure of the contribution of 'Birbal', who came and conquered.

Add to it a wit that is almost gallic in its sharpness and impersonal in its thrusts ; mix it with a scholarship that is as varied as it is wise in its grasp essentials ; and you get a glimpse of the personal secret of this master of Bengali prose. The Birbali style is unique, because Birbal's mind is a climate,—cold, clear and crisp. Its tang is in tune with the clang of fencing swords, sharp and pliant, content with drawing a drop and flying back to the scabbard, clean and easy. The almost aristocratic impersonality of this whole code of manners marks off Sri Pramatha Chaudhuri's essays from seemingly similar ones by many well-known English men of letters, in whom the personal note is often

an exercise in egocentricity. Birbal's *causeries* are not indulgences in privacies ; they are suggestions with a slant. Naturally his dialogues are brilliant, and comments on politics, economics, literature, music and the like, astoundingly shrewd. Naturally also, he has no system of philosophy ; which humility is seldom excused in this land of philosophers. And in these days when one has got to be either a Commissar or a Yogi to get on, Birbal could never be a partisan or a professor. He was only a visitor in the Congress pandals and a mere teacher of International Law at the University, occupations which were guarantees against orthodoxy and easy commitments. As a barrister, so the story goes, he used to see first the other side of the case, and both sides during the argument ; though for a judge he would be too flippant.

Such equipments have made Pramatha Chaudhuri the best un-sentimental story-writer (or is it the storyteller ?) in Bengali literature. In the *Chār Yāri Kathā*, where four England-returned men share their confidences, the heroines are a mad woman, a hard-boiled street-walker and thief to boot, a flirt, and a she-ghost. The heroes are counterfoils of each other. If one of them seeks poetry in life, another would exclude it ; if one equates beauty with reality, another invests the unreality of a departed spirit with the beauty of a living soul dedicated to service. The book concludes in that atmosphere of uncertainty in the reader's mind, which is a sure mark of the author's artistry and his loyalty to reality. For Pramatha Chaudhuri, the love of these love-stories is only human ; neither tragically pre-occupying nor cynically episodic. Look again how at the critical moment,—so often dangerous to a Bengali, nay an Indian writer, heavy with his emotional heritage,—our author turns away with a commentary on life. This self-denial is neither the fear of emotions associated with an escapist, nor is it the self-consciousness of an intellectual luckily dissociated from the affairs of quotidian existence. It is the control of the artist, to the manner born. To enjoy a more watchful restraint, one has

to read the series of stories narrated by Ghoshal, who is always veering his accounts in accordance with the wind of his master's whims—a brilliant symbolisation of the artist-public relation. Ghoshal is the parasite of a zemindar, and partakes of the culture of that order. He spins tales to help his patron while away his evenings outside the zenana. He is a musician and a scholar of sorts. Like a dear rascal, his tongue is his fortune. He comes in and goes out and collects experiences in the meanwhile. He reminds us of the rogues of the Renaissance. Creatures like Ghoshal of Birbal and Kamalakanta of Bankim Chandra are the true tokens of Indian Humanism. Readers in other provinces, where the feudal order is decaying, should take this realist of a Ghoshal unto their bosom.

Unsentimental though Pramatha Chaudhuri may be, he is not the realist who is romantic over misery and blind to beauty. In this book, as elsewhere, there are remarkable passages describing the beauty of nature and of women in various phases. The stormy night presses on the characters and memory is released. But it is not the memory of fair women of fixed types. Sometimes one feels while reading *Chār Yāri Kathā*, that its women are chunks of the sky and its men clods of clouds playing criss-cross with light and shade. The hues change from sombre to gay, with all the tonings in between. Probably gay rules, with a dash of nostalgia. Even then, no hint is given of frustration, that common variant of romantic realism. None of these chums of London days, held up by a storm in a Calcutta club, speak of their life being spoilt by India. If anything, they go back to their wives chastened by a comparison of notes on life. Sure they would meet again over their pegs; indeed, they have met too often in Bengali Literature, as imitations of their former selves, sicklied over with the pale cast of self-pity.

Apart from being an essayist and story-writer, Pramatha Chaudhuri is a competent poet. His couplets and sonnets have a wit of their own. He has also been one of our foremost editors. His *Sabuj Patra* (Green Leaf) was in the grand tradi-

tion of Bengali monthly journalism. For a decade that paper was the nucleus of a vigorous school of writers and thinkers. His talk and his library have gone to the make-up of many well-known men of Bengal. To-day, again, he is the editor of the *Visva-Bharati Patrika*, the Bengali monthly from Santiniketan.

A man of his varied gifts and striking contributions to Bengal deserves well of the country as a whole. To this end is directed the translation of one of Sri Pramatha Chaudhuri's major works by his talented wife, herself one of Bengal's foremost women and leaders of culture. I hope that through this excellent literal English rendering, the attention of readers and translators in Indian language, will be immediately drawn and due recognition given to the merit of the author. It is this earnest desire that overrides the shyness of a pupil in speaking about his *guru*.

Lucknow,
24th December, 1942.

DHURJATI PRASAD MUKHERJI

TALES OF FOUR FRIENDS

WE were so deeply absorbed in our game of cards that evening at the club, that none of us had noticed how late it was. When the clock suddenly struck ten, it startled us. No other clock in the city of Calcutta possessed such a hoarse voice. Its grating sound, harsher than that of a cracked gong, jarred on the ear for a long time ;—although we were used to it, yet somehow or other its raucous tone struck us as strangely disagreeable on that particular evening.

While we still held our cards and hesitated what to do, Sitesh rose suddenly, and turning towards the door cried out—

“Boy ! Order my carriage.” “Jo hukum,” came the answer from the next room.

“Why this hurry ?” said Sen, “let’s finish this game.”

“Nonsense ! Don’t you see how late it is ?—I shan’t stay another minute. As it is, I shall get a scolding when I go home.”

“From whom ?”—asked Somnath.

“My wife,” replied Sitesh.

“Has nobody else in the world got a wife at home but you ?”

“Your wives have given you up as hopeless, by now. Your comings and goings don’t concern them in the least.”

“That’s true enough,” said Sen, “but just because you’re a bit late for once—”

“A bit late ?—My time’s up at eight, and it’s now ten o’clock. And this doesn’t happen once in a way either. I hardly ever get home before the 9-30 gun goes.”

“And you get a scolding every day ?”

“Don’t I !”

“Then you must have got used to it. Haven’t you grown callous by now ?”

“Don’t talk rot. I’m off. Good-night !”

As Sitiesh turned to leave the card-room, the boy came and said, "The coachmen say they would rather not harness the horses just now. They're afraid it will rain heavily, and a storm may soon break also. As it is, the horses are getting restive in their stables. If they're taken out on the road they're sure to take fright, and may perhaps bolt. So it would be better to wait for half-an-hour."

This rather upset us, as not only Sitiesh, but all of us were eager to get home. We went out into the verandah to see whether a storm was really brewing. The look of the sky made me catch my breath and shiver. We all know how the sky looks on a cloudy day or a cloudy evening in this country ; but this sky seemed to belong to another world, and one could hardly tell whether it was day or night. There were no heavy masses of clouds above us or before us or around us ; somebody seemed to have covered the sky with a drab cloth, neither black nor dark—since a faint light filtered, as if through a shade of ashen grey glass. Never in my life had I seen such a dull, such a dead light spread over the whole sky. It was as if Saturn had cast his evil eye upon the earth, which seemed to lie stupefied, stunned and senseless under his glance. Looking round, I saw the trees and houses all standing stark as if in dread of some impending cataclysm ; and yet the light seemed to shed a ghastly smile over all things. The scene aroused in my mind the kind of mingled curiosity and fear that one experiences on seeing a smile on the face of a corpse. I wished a storm would burst, rain fall, lightning flash, thunder crash,—either that, or that it would grow darker, everything become submerged in black night. This paralysed and suffocated aspect of nature grew more and more intolerable every moment, yet I couldn't turn my eyes away from it ; I gazed fixedly and wonderingly at the sky, for this cloud-distilled light was strangely fascinating.

Turning round, I saw my three friends standing exactly where they were, all solemn and all silent. In order to break the evil spell, I shouted out, "Boy, four half-pegs !" This seemed to

wake them all up. "Vermouth for me, not whisky," said Somnath.

We all drew our chairs together and sat down, lighting our cigarettes absent-mindedly. Again there was silence. When the boy brought our drinks, Sitesh exclaimed, "A full peg for me, not half!"

I laughed and said, "I beg your pardon, I forgot the close connection in this case between solids and liquids."

"I am not descended from the dwarf-incarnation¹ like you," replied Sitesh, a trifle curtly.

"No, you are descended from the sage Agastya,² you could swallow a whole sea of wine at a gulp."

This time Sitesh got really annoyed and said, "Look here, Roy, I'm not in the mood for this sort of frivolous chaff just now."

I made no answer, because I felt that he was right. That weird light outside had penetrated our minds also, and changed their colour. In a moment we had become transformed. The ideas and feelings with which we deal in daily life had dropped from us, and those that remain latent and dormant during daylight had awakened and appeared in their stead.

"From the look of the sky, it seems we shall have to spend the night here," Sen remarked.

"At any rate we shouldn't venture out before another hour," said Somnath.

Thereupon all of us continued to smoke in silence.

After a while Sen began to speak in a low voice, as if to himself, with eyes fixed on the sky; and we listened to him in rapt attention.

1. One of the ten incarnations of the God Vishnu.

2. A sage who is supposed to have swallowed the ocean.

SEN'S STORY

You see how everything outside has suddenly become tense, silent and inert ; the living appears like the dead ; the heart of the universe has turned to stone, it has stopped breathing, its blood has ceased to circulate ; one feels as if everything has come to an end, as if there is nothing more to follow. Yet we all know that this is not true. It is because we are overpowered by the spell of this uncanny, unnatural and unholy light, that what is true appears to us false. Our minds are such slaves of our senses, that a slight change of colour is enough to change the meaning of the universe for us. I have had proofs of this before. On another occasion I saw another light in this sky, which by its spell filled the whole world with life ; at whose touch all that was dead grew animate, and all that was unreal became real.

It happened long ago. I had just taken my M. A. degree, and was sitting idle at home ; not doing anything, nor thinking of doing anything. There was no necessity for my earning any money, neither had I any intention of doing so. I had enough to live upon ; besides I was a bachelor, and hadn't the remotest idea of ever marrying. Luckily my people didn't worry me with requests either to seek employment or a wife. So I was absolutely free to do nothing. In a word, I had got a holiday in life, with power to extend it. Perhaps you're thinking that if fate had decreed such comfortable and happy conditions for you, none of you would have cared to change them. But this state of things was certainly not a happy one for me, nor was it comfortable. Firstly, my health was not very good. I had no particular complaint, yet a sort of insidious torpor seemed to be creeping gradually all over me. The will-power of my body was growing less and less every day, and I felt an extraordinary and unaccountable fatigue in every limb. I now understand that it was the fatigue of doing nothing. Anyhow, after tapping me back and

front, the doctors discovered that my disease was of the mind, and not of the body. They were right ; but it was impossible for any medical man to diagnose this mental disease ; because even the person whose mind it was, couldn't make out what was wrong ; I had no so-called anxieties, or in other words family worries ;—and no woman had run away with my heart. You will hardly believe me, yet it is absolutely true that, though I was in the heyday of youth, still no Bengali maiden had ever attracted my attention. The state of my mind had become so abnormal that there was no admission for any and every bread-and-butter miss.

For the real cause of my unhappiness and restlessness was that my mind had become detached from the world. Which doesn't mean that I had become indifferent to life ;—the reverse was the case. It was not from a distaste for life but rather from a passionate love for it, that my mind could not fit in with my surroundings. My body was in India, but my mind was in Europe. The light of Europe had penetrated that mind, and by that light I could see clearly that there was no life in this country ; that our words, our actions, our thoughts, our desires were all spiritless, powerless, feeble, sickly, morbid and moribund. Our social life appeared to me to be a huge puppet-show. To dress up like a puppet, take another bejewelled puppet by the hand and dance in the company of puppets,—the very thought of this was revolting to me. Even death was preferable to this, I knew ; but I didn't want to die, I wanted to live, to bloom, to glow,—not only in the flesh, but in the spirit. This unsatisfied longing was wearing me out in body and mind, for it had no definite object, no tangible form. All that existed in my mind then was a vague yearning ; and that yearning had created an ideal and imaginary heroine, who I believed would rouse me to life, as soon as we met. But I knew I would never meet that living woman in this land of the dead.

Of course in this morbid state of mind I used to feel no

interest in the work and pleasure of those around me, so I gave up the company of my fellow-men, and began to live in the land of European romance. The heroes and heroines of this romantic land were my constant companions by day and by night ; these imaginary men and women were to me creatures of flesh and blood ; whilst the real men and women around me flitted about like so many shadows. But although the condition of my mind was so unnatural, I hadn't lost my head altogether. I knew quite well that, unless I could recover from this abnormal state, I would become a physical and mental wreck. So I took good care that my health should not suffer ; for I knew that if I could preserve that, my mind would regain its sanity in due course. I used to go for long walks every day, rather late in the evening ; sometimes before, and sometimes after dinner. In the latter case, I usually returned home by eleven or twelve o'clock. What happened on one such evening, I have not yet forgotten, and perhaps never shall ; it has remained fresh in my memory to this day.

It was the night of the full moon. When I reached the banks of the river Ganges in the course of my solitary walk, it was nearly eleven in the evening. There was not a single soul to be seen in the streets, yet I could not bring myself to return home, because the moonlight was such as is seen in Calcutta perhaps once in ten years. Usually there is a kind of sleepiness about moon-light ; one feels that the light goes to sleep wherever it falls,—on land, on water, on the roofs, on the trees. But on that particular night a flood of light seemed to have been let loose in the sky. It seemed as if, one after another, and yet another, wave kept breaking upon the earth from the sphere of the moon,—innumerable, continuous and ceaseless. The horizon was foaming with the onrush of this rippling moonlight, which rose bubbling with its own intensity like the froth of champagne, and then scattered all around like laughter. This light had gone to my head, so I was wandering aimlessly, without any other feeling or thought in my mind than a nameless joy.

Suddenly my eyes fell upon the river, and I saw rows of ships floating in this light. It had never struck me before how beautiful their shape was ; in every line of their long slender frames a perpetual motion seemed incarnate,—whose impulse was towards the infinite, and whose energy was irrepressible and unconquerable. It seemed as if some fabulous birds had flown over from some fairyland across the seas, and were now resting with folded wings upon the waters ; but would spread their wings and fly home with the moonlight. That home was Europe, not the Europe that you and I have seen with our eyes , but the land dreamt of by poets, with which I had become acquainted through European literature. These ships conjured up before my eyes that land of beauty, that fairyland, and made it a living reality. I looked up at the sky and saw thousands of clusters of jasmine and hawthorn blooming and falling, scattering showers of white flowers all around. The flowers covered all the trees, fell through the leaves on to the grass and spread themselves over road and river. I felt that on such a night I should meet a Miranda, a Desdemona, a Beatrice or a Tessa,—whose touch would revive me, arouse me, make me immortal. I distinctly saw in my mind's eye the embodiment of my long-wished-for eternal feminine, waiting for me in the distance.

When I came to the Red Road, walking straight on like a man in his sleep, I saw a shadowy form pacing up and down, some distance ahead. As I approached, the shadow began to take on flesh, and left no room for doubt that it was a human being. When I had come quite near, it sat down on a bench by the roadside. Coming closer, I found that the occupant of the bench was an English girl, in the first bloom of youth, and extraordinarily beautiful ! She was not made of mortal clay,—she was moonlight incarnate ! I stopped startled before her, and gazed at her with wide-open eyes. She also looked at me intently. When my eyes met hers, I found they were shining brightly in the light ; I had never seen such brilliance in human eyes before. That light was not of the stars, nor of the moon, nor of the

sun—but of lightning ! That light made the moonlight brighter still, and sent an electric wave through it. The astral body of the universe became visible to me on that day, for an instant ; and in that moment this material earth became instinct with life and spirit. On that day I saw the vibration of ether with the eyes of the flesh, and with the eye of the spirit. I saw my soul vibrating in unison with that ether. All this was due to the magic of that evening's light, which had worked a complete transformation, not only in the outer world, but in my inner world as well. My body and mind, transfused into one, had taken shape in a single desire,—the desire of loving, and being loved in return. My enchanted mind had lost its intelligence and reason, even its consciousness.

After a while the girl, seeing me standing thus stock still, looked at me and smiled. Encouraged by that smile, I went and sat by her side on the bench, not quite close, but at a little distance. We were both silent. I need hardly say that I was dreaming then with open eyes ; and in that land of dreams there was no sound, only silent feeling. That I was dreaming was proved primarily by the fact that at the time everything impossible seemed to me possible. I had completely lost consciousness of the truth that in this city of Calcutta there was no chance of any Bengali Romeo's ever winning an European Juliet.

Perhaps this girl was as unhappy as I was, I thought, and for the same reason. Perhaps her mind had also become detached from the commercial community by which she was surrounded, and she too was passing day after day in sadness and lassitude ; waiting and hoping for that unknown to whom she would surrender herself, and thereby awake to a fuller and intenser life. And both of us had left our homes at the call of the wondrous beauty of this enchanting moonlight night. There was the hand of Providence in this meeting of ours. It had its beginning in the eternal past, and would never end in the eternal future. As soon as I discovered this truth, I turned towards my

companion. The eyes which I had seen glittering like diamonds a little while ago, now seemed to glow as softly as sapphires, and had become tinged through and through with a deep sadness ;—I had never seen a such sad and wistful look in human eyes before. It made my heart melt within me and overflow ; gently I drew one moonlit hand of hers within my tender clasp ; at the touch of that hand a tremor passed through my body and a wave of joy rushed through my mind. With closed eyes I enjoyed this new-found surge of emotion welling up within me.

Suddenly she snatched away her hand, and stood up. I saw that she was trembling, and her face was pale with fear. After glancing a little to right and left, she began to walk rapidly southwards. I turned and saw a six-foot-one tall Englishman, accompanied by four or five servants, walking quickly towards the girl. She advanced a step or two, then turned to look back, then again walked on, and again stopped to look. When the Englishman had nearly caught up with her, she began to run, and the others ran after her also. Shortly afterwards I heard a cry, which was as unnatural as it was awful. That cry made the blood curdle in my veins ; it struck me numb with terror, and took away all power of action. Then I saw four or five men catch hold of her and drag her towards me, accompanied by that English fellow. I must save her from this rough handling, I thought, I must rescue her from the clutches of these brutes. As I was about to rush towards them, the girl began to laugh aloud. That peal of laughter resounded on all sides, and was ten times more terrible and more heart-rending than her cries. I then perceived that the girl was mad, absolutely rank raving mad ; she must have escaped from the lunatic asylum in an unguarded moment, and the warders were now taking her back.

That was my first love, and that was my last. I have since seen many women in Europe, some soft as flowers, others bright as stars, and have even been momentarily attracted by them. But just as my heart was on the point of melting, that

weird laughter would ring in my ears, and my heart would turn to stone. Since that day I have lost the eternal feminine for ever, but have regained myself instead.

Here Sen ended his story. We all remained silent. Sitesh had hitherto remained with his eyes closed, and his six-foot form spread out on an easy-chair ; his Manila cheroot, about a quarter of a foot long, had fallen from his fingers on to the floor, where its acrid smell proclaimed to the world evidence of the hidden fire smouldering within its soul. I thought Sitesh had gone to sleep. Suddenly he shook himself and sat up in the midst of this silence, just as a huge fish heaves itself up out of the water. His bulky body seemed to loom on the shades of evening, like an immense image of Buddha wrought in an amalgam of eight metals. That image then began to speak in a thin, feminine voice. But what Sitesh said was hardly a repetition of the injunction Lord Buddha gave to his favourite disciple Ananda, anent what his attitude should be towards womankind !

SITESH'S STORY

You all know my nature is the exact opposite of Sen's. The very sight of a woman makes my heart melt. According to you, I am a living example of a weak heart in a strong body. In England I used to fall freshly in love once a month. How you all chaffed me about this, and what heated arguments I had with you ! But now that I know myself, I feel you were right. I'm only surprised that I didn't fall in love once a day, in those days. There is a mysterious force in the body and mind of woman, which attracts me physically and mentally. That attractive force dwells in the eyes of some, in the lips of others, or the tone of the voice, or the shape of the figure. I believe there is magic even in the colour of the fair one's dress, and the tinkling of her ornaments. I remember one day I succumbed to somebody who was wearing a mauve gown,—and it was only when I saw her another day dressed in pale blue, that I regained my equanimity of mind. I have not quite recovered from this weakness yet. Even to-day the jingle of anklets makes me prick up my ears, and my eyes naturally wander towards the open shutters of a closed carriage. If I see a Hindustani woman from behind, with a form like a Greek statue, I bend forward and try to catch sight of her face. Besides, in those days I firmly believed that I belonged to that class of men, for whom women naturally cherish a tender passion. That I didn't ruin myself or anybody else, in spite of all this, is because I never had, nor do I now possess, the courage and strength necessary to become a Don Juan. All the beautiful women in the world are still shut up in the glass-case of conventional morality,—that is to say, you can look at them, but not touch them. The reason why I have not broken even one pane of this glass-case in all my life, is that firstly, breaking glass makes a lot of noise, and the clatter rouses up the whole neighbourhood ; secondly, there is the danger of cutting one's hands and feet in the process. The fact of the matter is, that Sen sought to find the-eternal feminine in the one,

and I in the many. The result is the same. He hasn't found it, neither have I. The only difference between us two is that, if a hard heart like Sen's falls into the hands of a woman, she carves her name on it with a chisel ; but in a fluid heart like mine, any and every woman can dip her fingers and draw any lines she likes at random, and at the same time stir it slightly for a moment,—but she can't leave any impression upon it ; the moment the fingers are withdrawn, the marks are effaced also. That's why I find that, on the canvas of my memory, there remains the distinct picture of one woman alone. I have not yet forgotten a certain event that happened on a certain day, because such a thing doesn't happen twice in a lifetime.

I was then in London. I don't exactly recollect what month it was,—either the end of October or the beginning of November. Because I remember this much that fires had begun to be lighted in the rooms. One morning I got up and found, on looking outside, that it was evening,—just as if the light of the sun had gone out, yet the gas had not been lit. On going to the window to find out what had happened, I saw that all the people in the street had their faces hidden by umbrellas. You could only make out which were men and which were women, by the difference in their dress and gait. Those who were walking rapidly with heads buried in their umbrellas, and looking neither to right nor left were men, I gathered ; and those who, holding their umbrellas in their right hand, and gathering their skirts up to the knees with their left, were hopping along like snipe, were women, I surmised. From this I guessed that it had begun to rain ; for this rain was so fine that it could not be seen, and so soft that it could not be heard.

Which reminds me, have you ever noticed that in England it never clouds over when it rains ?—Only the sky becomes murky all over, and the trees, catching the infection, all become limp, and the roads all become slushy with mud. It seems as if half the rainy weather comes down from above, and the other half rises up from below ; and between the two of them they

make a dismal, dirty and disgusting mess all over the sky. I need hardly say that when I saw the day look like this, the first thing in the morning, my heart sank into my boots. Englishmen say they feel like committing murder on such days ; so it's small wonder that we should feel like committing suicide under the circumstances.

I had an engagement to go to Richmond with a friend ; but on a day like this I didn't feel inclined to go out. So I had breakfast, and began to read *The Times*. I read the whole paper that day, from first to last letter, without omitting a single word. That day I first discovered that the outer skin of *The Times* was more appetising than the pulp, the advertisements more interesting than the articles themselves. That which one feels on reading the articles, is called irritation ; and that which one feels on reading the advertisements, is called temptation. However that may be, as soon as I had finished reading the paper, the maid brought in lunch, which I sat and finished where I was. It was then two o'clock. Yet to all appearance there was no change outside, because the English rain knows neither how to fall, nor how to stop. The only difference apparent was that the light of day had grown so dim that you couldn't read print without lighting the lamp.

Unable to settle down to anything, I began pacing up and down the room ; but that soon became tiresome. Turning on the gas, I began to read again. At first I took down a law-book, Anson's *Contract*. I read the same thing ten times over, but not a word of "offer" and "acceptance" could my brain grasp. "Do you agree to this ?" I ask ; to which you reply "I agree." When I saw what a complicated thing man had made of such a simple matter, I felt hopeless about the future of mankind. If people only kept their word, we should not have to bear the burden of all this rubbish. I took the dust of Anson's hooves, and put him back on the topmost shelf of the bookcase. I then noticed an old copy of *Punch* lying before me, and proceeded to read again. To tell you the truth, instead of being moved to

laughter, that day I actually got annoyed with *Punch*. I felt astonished that people bought such machine-made jokes with money, and read them. I saw the vision of a future, when even witticisms labelled "Made in Germany" would find a ready sale in the markets of the world. I perceived that, as in their skies, so in the minds of this people, lightning flashes only occasionally,—and even then it is pale and sprawling. As soon as this struck me, I shoved *Punch* into the grate, and the fire roared with delight. I was glad to find that at any rate a material substance appreciated the worth of *Punch*.

Then I warmed myself at the fire for about ten minutes, standing with my back to the fireplace. After which I began to read again,—a novel, this time. It opened with the description of a dinner-party. On the table there were rows and rows of silver candlesticks, heaps and heaps of silver plate, dozens and dozens of fluted glasses, glittering like diamonds. And inside all those glasses there were wines of Spain and France and Germany,—some of the colour of rubies, others of emeralds, others of topazes. The name of the hero was Algernon, that of the heroine Millicent. The former was the son of a duke, the latter the daughter of a millionaire; Algernon was as handsome as a god, and Millicent as lovely as a nymph. They had recently come to love each other, with a love that was exceedingly pure, exceedingly sweet and exceedingly deep. At this dinner, Algernon was going to propose to Millicent, and she was going to accept him, thereby making the contract complete.

Just as the soul of Kalidasa, riding on a cloud, had journeyed to Alaka on a certain rainy day in the distant past, so my soul, in this inclement weather, strode the mist towards the silver realm described in this novel. I saw with the eye of my imagination a young maiden, like the love-lorn wife of Yaksha, waiting and longing for me to come. And her beauty!—words fail to describe it. She was like a golden image decked with precious stones. It goes without saying that I fell madly in love with

her, as soon as our eyes met. I dedicated myself heart and soul to her, without further ado ; and she accepted me tenderly and lovingly. Finally I won, not only the Yaksha's daughter, but his money also. Just then the clock struck four, and awoke me from my day-dream. When I opened my eyes, I found that I was not in fairyland at all, but in a damp dark land, full of slush. It was impossible to sit alone in my room any longer ; so taking my hat, umbrella and overcoat, I went out into the streets.

You know that, come rain, come storm, the streets of London are always full of people,—and so they were that day also. As far as the eye could reach, there was a continuous flow of human beings, all dressed in black ; with black hats on their heads, black boots on their feet, and black umbrellas in their hands. At first sight it seemed as if innumerable daguerrotype pictures had come out of innumerable books, and were rushing about the street in all directions. I felt more lonely in this crowd than in my room, because among all these thousands and thousands of men and women, there was not a single person whom I knew, with whom I could exchange a few words ; and yet at the moment I was overcome with longing to talk to a fellow-creature. It is only on such days and under such circumstances, that one can fully realise how necessary man is to man.

Wandering aimlessly about, I arrived somewhere near Holborn Circus. I saw a small old bookshop in front of me, in which a shrunken old man was sitting beneath a gas-light. The frockcoat he wore must have been older than himself, and what had been black in its youth, had now turned yellow with age. Absent-mindedly, I entered the shop. The old man hastily and respectfully rose to his feet. From his behaviour it would appear that a fashionably-dressed customer like myself had never before crossed the threshold of his shop. He dusted this book and that, and kept bringing it to me. Telling him not to disturb himself, I myself pulled out one book from here, another

from there, and began turning over the pages. I looked at the pictures of one for five minutes, then read a few pages of another. You all know how interesting it is to rummage among old books ; and I was absorbed in this enjoyment, when a sweet scent, like a whiff of spring on a rainy day, floated suddenly into the room, whence I know not. The scent was as penetrating as it was faint, and belonged to that class of perfume which enters your heart unawares, and stirs you to the depths. It was not the fragrance of flowers, because that is borne on the wind and scattered in the air ; it has no point. But this scent was of the kind that is propelled along a fine line, and pierces the heart like an unseen arrow. I knew it must be the scent either of musk or of patchouli,—that it had its origin in flesh and blood. Somewhat startled, I turned round to find a woman, dressed in black from top to toe, standing like a hooded snake resting on its tail. She didn't turn her eyes away, though she saw me staring at her open-mouthed ; but kept on smiling with compressed lips, as one does on meeting an old acquaintance. Yet I could swear that I had never set eyes on this woman in all my life. Unable to fathom the mystery of that smile, I turned my back on her somewhat shamefacedly, and began looking at a book. But not a single line of it caught my eyes. I felt as if her eyes were piercing my back, like knives. This made me so uncomfortable, that I turned towards her again, and saw the same enigmatic smile on her face still. On closer observation, I found that the smile belonged, not to her lips, but to her eyes. From the corners of both her eyes, which were blue as steel, and hard as steel, that smile glittered like the keen edge of a knife. As often as I tried to avoid her gaze, so often did my eyes turn towards it again and again. They say the eyes of certain snakes possess a magnetic power, which draws birds from the tree down to the ground,—and they can't fly away, however much they may flap their wings. My mind was in the same condition as those birds.

I need hardly say that by this time I had become mentally

intoxicated ; the scent of patchouli and the light of those eyes had combined to excite me both in mind and body. My brain was in a whirl, so I didn't know what I was doing at the time. All that I remember now is that suddenly we brushed against each other. I apologised ; she replied smilingly, "It's my fault, not yours." Something inside me vibrated at the tone of her voice, which was not that of a flute, but of a stringed instrument. There was resonance in its tone. After this introduction, we began to talk to each other as if we had been friends of long standing. I showed her a picture from some book, she drew out another and asked me if I had read it. I don't know how much time passed by in this way. I gathered from her conversation, that she was much better read than I was ; she was equally well-acquainted with German, French and Italian. I knew French, so in order to show off my knowledge, I took up a French book and started reading it from the middle. She stood behind me and, looking over my shoulder, tried to see what I was reading. Her chin rested on my shoulder, her hair touched my cheek ; in that touch there was the softness and fragrance of flowers, yet it set my mind and body on fire.

What I was reading in that French book was this verse :

*Si vous n'avez rien à me dire,
Pourquoi venir auprès de moi ?
Pourquoi me faire ce sourire
Qui tournerait la tête au roi ?*

which, roughly translated, means—"If you haven't anything to say to me, then why did you come near me, and why did you smile at me that smile, which would turn the head of a king ?"

When she saw what I was reading, the fair one broke into a little laugh. Her laughter dashed against my face, and blurred my vision. I could read no more. I was like a little child caught doing something naughty, who turns and twists and bends, and looks shamefacedly from one side to another, yet cannot say a word.

I shut the book and, calling the old man, asked him the

price. One shilling, he said. Taking out a morocco-leather case from my breast-pocket, I found there were only five sovereigns in it, and not a single shilling. I fumbled first in one pocket, then in another, but was unable to find one. Whereupon my newly found friend brought out a shilling from her pocket and, putting it into the old man's hand, said to me, "You needn't change a sovereign, I'll take that book." "No," said I, "that won't do." She smiled and replied, "Well, let it be for to-day ; you can return me the money when we meet next."

After that we both left the shop. Outside my companion asked me, "Are you going anywhere in particular now?"

"No," I replied.

"Then come with me up to Oxford Circus. A pretty-woman has much to trouble her, walking alone in the streets of London."

On hearing this suggestion, it struck me that the girl was attracted by me. Beaming with joy, I asked her, "Why?"

"Because men belong to the race of monkeys. If they see a girl walking by herself in the streets, and if she is young and pretty, then out of a thousand men, five hundred will turn again and again to look at her, fifty will accompany their looks with a sweet smile, five will try and force their acquaintance upon her, and at least one will come up to her and say, I love you."

"If such be our nature, then why take the risk of my company?"

She stopped suddenly and, looking at my face replied, "I am not afraid of you."

"Why?"

"There is another race of men, besides monkeys—who protect us."

"And what race may that be?"

"I'll tell you, If you won't get angry with me ; because though it may not be palatable, what I say is true."

"You may safely say what you like, because it is impossible for me to get angry with you."

"It is the race of house-dogs. This race of men grovel at our feet, gaze wistfully into our faces, wag their tails with delight if we pat them, and don't allow any other man to come near us. As soon as they see an outsider, they first growl, then show their teeth and, if that doesn't make him bolt, then they bite him."

Not knowing what to answer, I said, "I see you have a great respect for our sex."

Fixing her eyes on my face, she replied, "If not respect, at least I have love."

It seemed to me that her eyes bore witness to the truth of her words.

We had been going towards Oxford Circus all this time, but had not progressed far, because both of us were walking along very slowly.

After her last remark, I kept silent for a while. Then I asked a question, which will show how far I had lost my mental balance.

"When shall I see you again?"

"Never."

"But you said just now that when we met again. . . ."

"That was only because you were hesitating to take the shilling." Saying which she looked at me, and I saw on her face the same mysterious smile, whose meaning I have not been able to fathom to this day.

I was walking then like a man in his sleep. Though I could hear everything she said, I could not grasp its full meaning.

So I said in reply to her smile, "You may not want to see me, but I want to see you again."

"Why? Is there anything I can do for you?"

"Nothing, except let me see you! As a matter of fact, I can't live without seeing you."

"Have you read that in a novel or a play ?"

"I am not quoting from a book, but speaking from my own heart. What I have said is perfectly true."

"At your age, people don't know their own minds ; it takes time even to know the truth and falsehood of one's nature. Just as little children feel tempted to eat a sweet whenever they see one, so young men of twenty or thereabouts fall in love as soon as they see a girl. All that is the false appetite of youth."

"Perhaps what you say is true. But all I know is, that you have come to me to-day like the breath of spring, making the flowers bloom in my heart."

"They are the season-flowers of youth, which die in a moment ; they bear no fruit."

"If it be so, then why do you turn your face away from the flowers you yourself have called forth ? Whether they are ephemeral or immortal, time alone can tell."

Upon this she looked somewhat serious, and kept silent for a while. Then she said, "Do you imagine you can follow me for ever on this life's path ?"

"I believe I can."

"Not knowing whither I am leading you ?"

"Your light will show me the way."

"And if that light prove to be a will-o'-the-wisp ? Then some day you will lose your way and cry in the wilderness."

I couldn't think of anything to say in reply. Seeing me silent, she said, "There is such a look of sincerity in your face, that I know you are saying exactly what you feel at this moment. That is why I don't wish to entangle your life with mine. It will only make you unhappy. I have no desire to make you suffer, as I have made so many others suffer. Firstly, you are a stranger in our midst ; secondly, you are altogether green."

By this time we had reached Oxford Circus. I said somewhat excitedly, "My heart tells me that no greater sorrow can befall me than to lose you. So if you don't wish to make me miserable, tell me when we shall meet again."

Perhaps there was a certain pathos in my tone, which touched her heart. Looking at her eyes, I could see that she felt sorry for me. "Very well," she said, "give me your card, I shall write to you."

Immediately I took out a card from my pocket-case, and gave it to her. When I asked for her card in return, she replied she hadn't any with her. I pressed her to tell me her name, but she absolutely refused to do so. At last after repeated entreaties, she said, "Give me one of your cards, I'll write it on the back; but you must promise not to look at it till half-past six."

It was then twenty minutes past six. I promised to wait patiently for another ten minutes. Thereupon, taking my pocket-case from me, she turned her back, took out a card, scribbled something on it, put it back into the case, and returned it to me. Then jumping into a cab which was standing by, she told the man to drive straight to the Marble Arch. The cab disappeared in the twinkling of an eye. Turning into Regent Street, I entered the first restaurant I came across, and sat down with a pint of champagne. Every minute I kept looking at the clock. Ten minutes seemed to me ten hours. No sooner did the half-hour strike than I opened my pocket-case, and what I saw cured me at one stroke from the effects of both love and champagne. The card was there, but the sovereigns were not. On the back of the card the following words were written in a beautiful feminine hand: "Man's money is much more necessary to me than man's love. If you never try to seek me out, then you will prove yourself a real friend."

Of course I never tried to find her, nor did I ask the police to do so. Probably you will be surprised to hear that what I felt that day was not anger, but pity, and that not for myself, but for her."

Somnath meanwhile had been smoking one cigarette after another, as he always did. A regular little cloud of smoke had

gathered before his face. He was gazing at that smoke intently, as if he had discovered some new truth in its midst. We knew from previous experience that when Somnath appeared most absent-minded, then it was that his mind was most awake and alert ; not a single word escaped his ears, not a single thing escaped his eyes. Somnath's clean-shaven face was like the dial of a clock ; that is to say, even when the inner mechanism was working at full speed, not the least change was visible on the surface, not a single line of the face was disturbed. Of course there was conscious art in this self-control of his. As soon as Sitiesh finished his story, Somnath frowned slightly. From which we understood that Somnath had put the string to his bow, and the arrows would begin to fly shortly. We didn't have to wait long. Transferring the cigarette from his right hand to his left, he began telling his story in a mellow, yet crystalline voice. Somnath had trained his speaking voice in the same way as people train their voices for singing,—there was not the least trace of harshness or indistinctness about it. His enunciation was so clear, that each syllable of the words he spoke could be easily counted. This friend of ours had early in life given up the habit of speaking simply and naturally, like ordinary folk. His hair had grown grey before he grew a moustache. He used few words or many, as suited the occasion. His few words were pointed, and his many words carefully arranged. Somnath's attitude prepared us to listen to a long discourse. So our eyes fell at once from his face to his fingers. For we knew that he had taught his fingers too to accompany his words.

(To be continued)

REVIEWS

CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY FOR INDIA : By N. Gangulee.

(George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London. 16s net)

As a publicist, Dr. Gangulee has been exhibiting amazing versatility ; within the last five years there has been an unending stream of extremely readable monographs from him. If he has advised us what to eat, he has also told us what the Germans have been supplied with as food for their mind by their Nazi leaders ; we have got an excellent book of stories from him and a learned one on Health and Nutrition in India. He is now before us with his own solution of the Indian constitutional problems and a history of the constituent assemblies convoked at various periods in different countries, all within a short span of 300 pages. Like his other books, the present one too is an interesting study, written in clear, lucid style, occasionally brightened by wit and humour. The book will serve very well the purpose of senior students in our universities, though Dr. Gangulee possibly had not it in his mind ; for he does not write with the pontifical authority of a professional expert. In fact, the hand of the amateur is clearly discernible in every page ; but that is not to pay the author a dubious compliment. His writing reveals a refreshing candour and enthusiasm, which is not usually found in one technically concerned with a subject ; on the whole, for the lay reader, it is an intelligent amateur who can give a better book. Dr. Gangulee has evidently worked hard on the subject for he has quoted widely and effectively from classical authors as well as from daily newspapers. The usefulness of the book has been considerably increased by the addition of no less than ten important appendices. Many a harassed teacher of Constitutions, like myself, will find the book very useful for reference purposes.

The book deals really with three different themes. It opens with a theoretical chapter on what can be termed aetiology of constituent assemblies —perhaps the weakest chapter in the whole book. Then there follows in quick succession a historical survey of the constitutional assemblies in different countries of Europe and the U. S. A., followed by a very capable survey of the post-1935 constitutional development in India. This is the most thorough and well-grounded chapter of the book and should help to a considerable extent to dissipate the hazy ideas generally held by John Briton about the aims and achievements of the Congress governments which functioned for nearly two years in eight out of the eleven provinces. Then follows the author's own prescription for a constituent assembly for India, "freedom

to achieve freedom." This chapter is written in a very personal vein and may be interpreted as his own solution to the problem. I wish he could convince me a little more ;—there are dangerous crevices and cracks in his arguments, for Dr. Gangulee suffers from an uncertain mind. His heart is with the Congress but his brain is mortgaged to Moscow. And, as every one knows, Wardha and Moscow cannot be quite equated. I shall not quarrel with him for his burning faith in the desirability of abolishing private property—the panacea for all earthly ills—but why should an intelligent person like Dr. Gangulee not be able to express his views without such schoolboy-like repetition of phrases as "bourgeois system of private property," "riveting the yoke of the bourgeoisie", etc. passes my comprehension. And I most certainly join issue with him when he states that "communal ferments are usually produced by the oppression of a host of parasites living in rural and industrial areas among the 90 per cent majority of our population." It is indeed a fact that in the main the landlords and, what is worse, the moneylenders are usually from the Hindu section of the community but it would not be correct to attribute communal disturbances to this social phenomenon. Dr. Gangulee knows it only too well, for when he is giving vent to his feelings against our rulers and not thinking of his newly acquired economico-egalitarian creed, he says, "Villagers are usually tolerant of one another's caste and creed. Among them, unless it is deliberately fostered from outside, communal antagonism seldom arises . . . (page 242). Dr. Gangulee has long lived away from his motherland and possibly he is not so well posted about facts. Very often he suffers from wishful thinking as when he would have us believe that "slowly but surely, it is the masses who are driving the National Movement onward." Were it so, I am sure Gandhiji would not have had to undergo his latest fast. Our leaders still unfortunately lead.

A. K. Chanda.

WOMEN AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE : By M. K. Gandhi.

(Published by Navajivan Publishing House, Allahabad.

Pp. 276. Price : Rupees Two.)

IN every age the mission and message of the prophet has contributed to the quickening of the sense of self-respect of those whom Society or the State had treated with inadequate justice. It is no wonder, therefore, that in our own times, under the impact of Gandhiji's dynamic personality, all such elements in our country as had hitherto been denied free and full

scope for self-development have become aware of their purpose and place in the economy of humanity. And among these woman has suffered most from the effects of stunted growth.

Gandhiji, with the unerring intuition of love, which often reveals itself in imaginative sympathy, has succeeded in laying his finger on the crux of the matter. He tracks down all the ills of woman,—from child-marriage to chattel-status, from her slavery to the kitchen to her treatment as a step-daughter, whether in the court or in the church,—to sheer social injustice. The book, under review, is a compilation of his views, publicly expressed between 1918 and 1942 through the well-known weekly organs, *Young India* and *Harijan*, on the many aspects of the Woman's problem.

His sovereign remedy for the social disease is not so much legislation by the state as self-reliance. "Woman is sacrifice personified. When she does a thing in the right spirit, she moves mountains." Let her, then, first strive to know what is right and, knowing it, pursue it afterwards with the earnestness of apostles. For, public opinion, created and cultivated along proper lines, will be more a powerful "leveller" as well as lever than the best of statutes or scriptural injunctions.

A Foreword by Rajkumari Amrit Kaur and an elaborate index have increased the usefulness of this timely and excellently got-up and printed publication.

G. M.

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF THE MUGHALS :

By P. Saran. Rs. 9/-

THE ORIGINS OF PROVINCIAL AUTONOMY : By B. Prasad. Rs. 7/8/-

Published by Kitabistan, Allahabad.

THE KITABISTAN is one of the foremost of progressive publishers in India and, though young in the line, they have already published some remarkable monographs, directly connected with live problems of Indian history, politics and culture. The two books under review add considerably to the balance of credit in their favour.

Both the above books, generally speaking, refer to the same subject—the provincial administration of India and the relation between the provinces and the centre. Though widely separated by the time factor, it has been both interesting and profitable to read them together. Dr. Saran's book is almost encyclopaedic in its scope, and is rather strong meat for the lay reader, though the writer wields a lively and sure pen. As a matter of fact, the book is not meant for the casual reader but is earmarked for the serious

student of Indian history. The value of the book has, therefore, been considerably enhanced by several important appendices and maps and a very useful bibliography.

Dr. Saran, unlike Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad, has not merely described ; he has many theories of his own to offer and theories of others to dispute and deny. He is not particularly appreciative of the work done by Indian scholars already in the field ; he refers to Prof. Qanungo's conclusions and theories, as based more on fond imagination than on facts. He also belittles much of the work done by Sir Jadunath as "betraying an unfortunate lack of a sympathetic appreciation of the relative value of the medieval political institutions and the environment in which they grew." A little more charity in the criticism of the work done earlier on the subject would not have been misplaced.

Dr. Saran has also very boldly parted from tradition by spelling the Indian proper names, as they are "correctly spoken" ; for instance, he writes throughout "Dihli" and not "Delhi." But "Delhi" has been sanctified by time and usage and not much harm would have been done if he had not tried the swadeshi spelling, so late in the day.

Dr. Bisheshwar Prasad's book is much narrower in its scope ; it merely portrays the development of provincial autonomy during the period 1860—1920, and is, as has already been mentioned, mostly descriptive. He has hardly any comments of his own to offer. But every page of the book bears witness to the painstaking labour expended by the author in going through the mass of official correspondence between the government of India and the various provincial units. He has utilised his material to the best advantage and we have in the result a very readable book dealing with an interesting factor of Indian administration.

Both the books, as usual with Kitabistan wares, are well produced. Dr. Saran, however, is better served by the publishers. But how one wishes the price were not so high !

A. K. Chanda.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT : By C. F. Andrews.
(George Allen and Unwin, 6s.)

THE manuscript of this book was found among C. F. Andrews' papers after his death. At the memorial service held at Santiniketan on the evening of his funeral, Rabindranath Tagore paid a moving tribute to his friend which is appropriately embodied in the foreword. The Poet expressed the feelings of India when he called the life of Andrews "a noble embodiment

of the Sermon on the Mount". Andrews brought to his subject not only a fine scholarship, and the knowledge of man's deepest needs which was the fruit of a life-time of experience, but also the greatest qualification of all, a Christ-like spirit. He had tested the life of which he speaks in his own daily practice, and therefore his words have authority.

The book is in a sense incomplete. The text of the whole Sermon is given (Matthew, Chapters V, VI, VII), but the commentary covers only Chapter V and the first few verses of Chapter VI. The rest was never written. Certain redundancies, especially in the introductory chapters, also indicate the unrevised condition in which the text was left. But this formal incompleteness is quite irrelevant to our appreciation of the book ; for into his simple, feeling commentary on those words of Christ which were his life-long watchwords, Andrews infuses the single-minded wholeness of his own way of life.

Does Christ present two standards of life, one for the religious specialist, and one for the ordinary man ? If not, are not his standards impossibly high, and would not a less exacting ethic have a wider practical effect ? Is his not a merely individual morality and will it work when applied to nations and communities ? Such questions are of major importance to the serious religious thinker. Andrews faces them squarely, yet he relies for his answers less on reasoned argument than on the inner knowledge of the mind of Christ which prayer and obedience can give.

The passage in which Andrews speaks of this inward mystical experience is one of those that remain in the mind. Another is that in which he turns the search-light of the Law of Love on the triple wickedness of industrial exploitation, racial imperialism, and war. Other passages which will be valued by many are those where in a few simple words he illuminates the meaning of some familiar sentence, as he shows it to us in its historical context or expounds the exact implications of the original Greek. The question of Jesus, "What do ye more than others ?", or as Andrews prefers to translate, "What do ye *to excess* ?", inspired the passion of self-surrender for Christ's sake which was at the heart of his radiant faith. Here for him is the core of the message which Christ died to bring—that God, "who is worthy of a greater love than we can either give or understand" can so fill our hearts with his grace "that *nothing* may seem too hard for us to do or to suffer" in loyalty to him

Because the book is so filled with the central realities of Andrews' life, "he, being dead, yet speaketh". May he speak to many who will both hear and understand !

Majorie Sykes.

STUDIES ON SOME CONCEPTS OF THE ALANKARA SASTRA :

By Dr. V. Raghavan, M. A., Ph. D. (Published By the Adyar
Library, Madras, 1942 ; pp. XX + 312. Price Rs. 4/-).

MR. G. SRINIVAS MURTI remarks in the foreword to the volume that the vast and noteworthy contributions of Indian minds on the subject of literary criticism have not yet received the attention which scholars here and in other countries have shown to Indian contributions to Philosophy. But there are in fact some scholars who are exceptions to this remark and Dr. RAGHAVAN is surely one of them.

Dr. Raghavan has in this volume traced the treatment of Lakṣaṇa, Alāṅkāra, Swabhāvokti, Bhāvika, Rīti, Aucitya, etc. in Sanskrit poetics by all the chief writers from Bharata to Jagannātha. On the basis of a detailed historical survey of the concepts, as developed by those writers, he has endeavoured to understand and interpret their underlying ideas and the value of those for the art and appreciation of literature. A true critic in method and outlook, the author has based this sumptuous survey of the history of some concepts of Indian literary criticism on a critical analysis of the original sources, and on the interpretations of the Western critics in the field of Poetics in general. No available source of information has been left out of consideration and every datum has been utilized with singular care and discernment. Previous theories and opinions have been discussed in detail and accepted or rejected with full reasons thereof. The study of Aucitya, i. e. the sense of propriety in literary art, presented in this book, forms the only account of that important concept. The quotations from Sanskrit works are well-chosen, but not always translated or well-translated—the latter fact forming a rather serious drawback in this otherwise successful publication.

Along with the author's books on The Number of Rasas and Bhoja's Śṛṅgāra-Prakāśa, the work under review constitutes an excellent compendium of the history of different concepts of Indian Poetics—both theoretical and critical. We congratulate the author on his laudable attempt and request him to bear in mind that, in view of the eminent success he has achieved in the three works already published, the completion of the series is a great desideratum, for which the students of Indian Aesthetics would be eagerly waiting.

Nagendranath Chakravarti.

**GERMANS BEYOND GERMANY: An Anthology Edited with
Biographical Notes and an Introduction by Vilem Haas.
The International Book House Ltd.,
Bombay, 1942. Rs. 4/-.**

NOTHING is more dangerous for a clear understanding and intelligent appreciation of a foreign culture than sweeping generalisations in terms of "national" attitudes or "racial" beliefs. The only approach which seems to be justified is one based upon a sociological and psychological analysis of the datas of culture as they are transmitted from generation to generation, expressed in terms of political history, of social progress, of literature and the arts, of religion, and last but not least of all, of ethical values. Such an approach has been attempted by the compiler of this remarkable anthology. His introduction belongs to the very best as yet written on contemporary Germany.

His approach is mainly literary ; but German literature provides ample material for an analysis of this kind. For it proves to us that it is almost impossible to speak of a "German" mind, of "German" civilization, and even—paradoxically enough—of "German" literature. The average reader does not know probably that almost the whole of German Literature is still inaccessible to the foreigner, except of course that part which is officially recognized abroad, such as a little Goethe, a little Schiller, a little Heine, and a little Nietzsche. The more representative works of literature, those in which the German urge towards annihilation, darkness, and death is best expressed, such as, for instance, in Kleist, Hoelderlin, or Novalis, are practically unknown outside Germany. It is indeed one of the merits of this astoundingly lucid introduction to have made this distinction between the small élite of "humanistic" writers who lived isolated not only from the people but also from the governing class, and that much larger and more representative group of writers who, from the very beginning of the history of the German nation as an independent political unit, have found inspiration in the blood-thirsty cruelties of the dark ages, in the irrational urges of mankind towards self-destruction and utter annihilation. The "real" greatness of German culture and literature does not lie in the serenity and classical moderation of a Goethe, a Schiller, or a Heine ; it is inseparably bound up with the same neurotic craving towards dissolution which frequently takes the shape of a very "real" insanity. It is no accident that three of the greatest German writers either ended their lives in a lunatic asylum, as Hoelderlin and Nietzsche, or committed suicide, as Kleist. A similar kind of almost deliberate insanity can be found in the works

of Novalis, in all the writers of the "Storm and Stress" (probably the most representative and least known period in German literature), in Schopenhauer, in Wagner.

This all may sound like rather too deliberate and explicit an attempt at political propaganda. It actually is nothing of the kind. Anyone who cares to open a German book or a history of German literature will come across the same discrepancy in their conception of "greatness" and that of common human sanity. Is it therefore in any way surprising that many of the best known German authors felt like foreigners in a country where insanity was worshipped throughout the ages (as it is, for instance, today in terms of politics), and where the art of living together was till the beginning of the last century still on the same level as that of the contemporary wild tribes of Central Africa ? Therefore every century of German history had its exiles, literary and others. This anthology consists of the writings of such spiritual exiles. The Germans beyond Germany are the élite which revolted again and again against the brutality and cruelty of the average man-in-the-street, but whose voice was not strong enough to impose itself upon the minds of the people or was so successfully suppressed that nobody ever heard of it.

It is true, there are also Englishmen beyond England and Frenchmen beyond France ; some of the greatest writers in these countries revolted against their own people. And we may also add that there are Indians beyond India. But what a difference between the mildly ironical comment of a Bernard Shaw on the social attitudes of the average Englishman or a Romain Rolland's deeply moving criticism of the French governing class, on the one hand, and Heine's biting sarcasm, Goethe's bitter disillusionment, or Nietzsche's undiluted hatred, on the other !

It is good that this book has been published now. It comes at a time when—especially in India—a proper approach to Germany is necessary. Due to loose thinking and to common misconceptions, the average Indian is liable to have a wrong idea of Germany and what is so glibly called the German mind and civilisation. This book, both the introduction and the extracts, will, we hope, open the minds of many readers in this country to the elements inherent in German literature, its greatness—and its dangers when analysed in terms of human psychology and social attitudes.

A. Aronson.

CONFLICT OF ECONOMIC IDEOLOGIES IN INDIA

An Attempt at Reconciliation

By Dr. Sudhir Sen. B. Sc. (E. Com.) Ph. D.

(Visva-Bharati Economic Research Studies No. 1.

Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan. Price : Annas eight only).

It is a recognised fact that India is very poor and that millions of her population are extremely ill-fed and ill-clothed. Economists have drawn the attention of the public to the unparalleled poverty of the people and have frequently made comparisons with conditions existing elsewhere, especially, in the west. There have been endless discussions on the subject and many solutions have been suggested. Of the two points of view which have been most persistently put forward, the first one is represented by those who advocate the adoption of cottage industries in solving the problem of poverty. They hold that there are large numbers of people in the country who are unemployed and many more who are under-employed. Now if these unemployed persons do some work, say, spin a little yarn, weave a little cloth or husk a little rice or grind oil, they will add to the national wealth, and consequently the standard of living will rise. The extra income will not be much but it will be something—so insist the cottage industry school of thinkers. It is better to earn a few pice a day by spinning than just earn nothing.

The other point of view has been put forward by the socialists. They have no patience with the above method. Their plan is to have large scale industries. All the resources of the country should be utilised and many large scale factories set up. Work should be done mainly by machine and one man should be able to produce as much as many workers in a small scale industry. There should be sufficient number of factories to engage each and every able-bodied person. It may appear at first sight that if everyone is employed there will be so much of goods that there will be no market available for such a lot of commodities. Well, the produced goods will be divided among the workers and no question of finding a market will arise. The producers themselves will be consumers. If it is then found that by working 7 or 8 hours a day a person produces so much that he is unable to use up all that he produces then his working hours may be reduced and he will have leisure for self-development and cultural activities.

It is an admitted fact that by using machinery the standard of living can be raised greatly and by industrialisation it is possible to satisfy man in all his material needs and also free him from continual labour which the cottage industry cannot. The cottage industry neither raises the

standard of living appreciably nor does it free the worker from continual labour.

In this very ably written pamphlet the author has discussed the point of view of the cottage industry school and of the socialists. The former has its most staunch advocates in the All India Spinners Association and All India Village Industries Association. He has put forward what can be said for and against both the schools and, in course of developing his arguments, discusses the problem of poverty in relation to unemployment, over-population and other kindred problems.

The two economic ideologies as stated above are diametrically opposite and they are conflicting. But the author has made a brave attempt at reconciling these two ideologies. He is firmly of the opinion that neither charka and cottage industries nor machine will ultimately solve the problem. He suggests the setting up of large industries side by side with cottage industries. Iron, aluminium, tanning and other heavy industry should be on a large scale, as these cannot be run on a small scale. These will produce raw materials which will be distributed to cottage industries. These cottage industries will be situated all over the country and will be supplied with electric power from central station. These small industrial units each engaging 5—100 men will produce finished goods to be consumed locally. In support of his contention that this is possible and has been successfully done, he gives valuable data relating to small decentralised industries of Japan.

Now, no one can quarrel with Dr. Sen for this admirable suggestion, but certainly it is no *reconciliation* of the two conflicting *ideologies*. It is supporting the machine school, but only going a step further by insisting that those things like slums, dirt, bad housing conditions, low wages, exploitation and all the rest of what were the necessary adjuncts of industrial development during the heyday of *laissez faire* should be done away with.

The pamphlet will serve an extremely useful purpose in clearing up many points between those who would have us go back to the village and spin yarn and those who would have us follow the footsteps of Soviet Russia.

S. P. Bose.

THE STREAM DIVINE : being discourses of Shri Shukacharyaji
of Ankleswar, Gujrat, "re-collected" by Hiralal C. Tarkas
and rendered into English by P. M. Trivedi, M. A.
(Published by Shree Shukadeo Shreyas Sadhak
Mandal, 198, 10th Road, Khar, Bombay.
Pp. 152. Price Rupee One.)

THESE discourses, nine in number, deal with the secrets of self-realization, in the light of Hindu faith and philosophy. The teacher delivered them, in Gujarati, originally ; later on, they were "re-collected" and integrated by one of his devoted disciples. In the present volume, Professor Trivedi has offered, more or less, a *résumé* in English to those who are not acquainted with the original.

The cardinal truths of the spiritual life are interpreted from the standpoint of Vedanta and illustrated with interesting stories and homely similes. As such, the reader is easily enabled to cultivate the sense of discrimination between truth and untruth.

Classifying the contents under appropriate titles would have, however, facilitated his study. Another point : can Mr. Hiralal C. Tarkas be really called "author" of the book, if the latter be a report of the teacher's discourses ? Perhaps, it is a report-cum-remembrance, in which case it is not unlikely that the spirit of the original speaker's meaning or message has been "stepped down" by him.

G. M.

THE PROMISED DAY IS COME : By Shoghi Effendi. (Published
by the Baha'i Assembly of Bombay, Mehta House, Apollo
Street, Bombay, Pp. 178. Price : Rs. Five.)

THE three false gods, whom the world has been worshipping during the last several decades, are Nationalism, Racism and Communism. And the votaries have evolved their own pattern of loyalty and logic of their particular parish-pump. To them, declares Baha-Ullah,—the latest harbinger of harmony and happiness in the radiant ranks of humanity's teachers down the ages :

"The world is but one country and all mankind its citizens."

"Glory is not his, who loves his native land, but glory is his who loves his kind."

The true god, then, is Humanism (if an "ism" has at all to be coined). The present book, which is an Indian edition of the original

published in America in 1941, attempts to interpret the teachings of the prophet and indicate their application, ideologically, to the problems that call for insistent and immediate solution. But will the statesmen of East and West listen, even now, to his passionate plea for the establishment of the Parliament of Man as against the present-day conclaves of jingoists? If they do, then the promised day is come, otherwise it will continue to be just a vision of the faraway.

G. M.

GEOGRAPHICAL FACTORS IN ARABIAN LIFE AND HISTORY :

By Shaikh Inayatullah, M.A., PH.D. (Lond.).

Published by Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf,

Kashmiri Bazar, Lahore. Rs. 4/8/-.

IT is easy to imagine the sentiments associated with Arabia in the mind of a Muslim. It is the holy land, the land chosen by God for the revelation of the true religion. It is natural to assume that such a land must of necessity be a wonderful land. It is therefore greatly to the credit of the present author that, while holding the faith of a good and true Muslim, he has been able to take an objective and dispassionate view of the geographical and economic factors that have influenced Arabian life, culture and history. He has described in detail every factor in the physical and climatic environment of Arabia, its hydrography, the limitations of its soil, the general economy of Arabian life, the part played by domestic animals in it, specially the camel, and the relation of all these factors to the ways of Arabian life, the diet of the Arabs, their social habits, their political organisation, their literary and religious imagination. Why, for example, the camel, which seems to us such a clumsy and ungainly creature, should have been the subject of almost every Arabic poet's adoration. It is said that the Arabic language has four thousand names for this animal. Varied and strange are the uses to which this animal is put. "In summer, in the absence of water, camel-urine is used for washing hair, chiefly by women. It is said to possess even medicinal properties. When hard pressed for water, the Bedouins are reported to slaughter their camels and drink the water from their paunches."

This book should prove indispensable to all students of oriental history and sociology. Even for the lay reader it makes fascinating reading. The author has selected his material carefully and has enlivened the scientific accuracy of his thesis with many interesting details about the life and habits of the people of Arabia. The author claims with justifiable pride

that the scientific attitude which correlates geographical environment with the social and cultural life of a people was developed by Arab thinkers and writers (who had learnt it from their Greek predecessors), long before the modern Europeans took it up. In this connection he quotes a remark of Abu'l-Qāsim Sā'id (1029-1069) regarding the physical and mental characteristics of the people of Northern Europe, which is rather interesting. "Because the sun does not shed its rays directly over their heads, their climate is cold and atmosphere clouded. Consequently their temperaments have become cold and their humours rude, while their bodies have grown large, their complexion light and their hair long. They lack withal sharpness of wit and penetration of intellect, while stupidity and folly prevail among them." This judgment, though hasty, is more sober than the ordinary run of judgments that European thinkers, even of the twentieth century, form of oriental peoples.

K. R. K.

WHAT TO EAT AND WHY : By Dr. N. Gangulee. With a
Foreword by Julian Huxley. Oxford University
Press. Price : Rs. 3/-.

THAT a healthy and happy people are the best wealth a nation can possess is one of those truisms that are too often quoted on platforms and too often ignored in practice. And yet the truism has to be repeated so long as that worst form of ignorance, "the ignorance of the educated", persists. The life of the vast majority of our people is conditioned by their poverty and if they are ill-nourished it is mainly because they are under-fed. But what of the educated, middle-class minority who have enough to eat and yet eat wrongly ? It is mainly to such people that this excellent little book is addressed.

Dr. Gangulee, who is the author of a very learned and comprehensive thesis on the same subject (*HEALTH AND NUTRITION IN INDIA* : By N. Gangulee. Faber and Faber, Ltd. London), has in this book churned the vast knowledge that has been gathered in the recent years on the subject of human nutrition and has presented its substance to the common reader in a form easily assimilable by him. After demonstrating the exquisite mechanism of the human body, the author discusses its relation to food and analyses the different constituents of food and the part they play in keeping the machine in a fit and working order. He then examines the common food-stuffs available in India and their nutritive value in the

light of research that has been carried on in India and in different countries of the world. The Appendices contain very useful tables of Nutrition Charts, some simple experiments on nutrition, followed by a glossary of common technical terms. The author is to be congratulated for having achieved simplicity of exposition without sacrificing scientific accuracy. We hope the book, which is excellently got-up, will be widely used by schools and colleges all over India.

One word more. We cannot help noticing the irony of advising the Indian people on how to improve their diet at a time when the vast bulk of them cannot even get the barest quantity of the coarsest food to kill their hunger. The irony is heightened by the following quotation on the frontispice from His Excellency the Viceroy : "What, indeed, is the use of spending public funds on objects such as education, welfare schemes and the like if the people have not the health and vigour of mind and body to take full advantage of them and to enjoy them ?" What indeed !

C. C. Bhattacharya.





SRIMATI RECEIVES THE MESSAGE



THE NATI'S DANCE OF WORSHIP



SRIMATI LIES DEAD

WOMAN*

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

WOMAN is the ancient one in human creation. Her energy partakes of the primordial force (ādyā-śakti) underlying human society, bringing life into existence and nourishing it.

The master-builder of this world made it worth living after aeons and aeons of moulding and hammering. That work was not half-finished when Nature started creating Life and Pain showed her face on this earth. Nature has introduced that elemental pain, that birth-throe, in woman's veins and in her heart. Nature has endowed woman's body and mind with the vigorous impulse of nursing life. That impulse, naturally, has found its deepest and largest place in emotional rather than in intellectual capacities. That instinct is ever weaving in woman's soul the net of relationship to hold others on to herself, with pathetic patience, affection and love. That is the primeval bond which builds and holds human family, and family is the foundation of all societies and civilisations. But for that original bond, mankind would have got dispersed into shapeless vapoury nothing, without getting integrated into a centre of relationship. To woman belongs the primal function of holding family and society together.

Nature's creative processes are hidden and there is no doubt or diffidence about their spontaneous evolution. That natural flow of life courses through woman's soul which has therefore been called mysterious by men. That is probably why we notice in woman's life the sudden manifestation of exuberant impulse which is beyond logic and which has its own justification in a causeless mystery. It is not a tank excavated to satisfy our needs ; it is a natural spring.

* English translation by Dr. Kalidas Nag of an Address delivered at the All-Bengal Women Workers' Association, 2nd October, 1986.

The mystery of affection and love is very old and inscrutable. It never argues to justify itself. It demands a quick solution wherever it confronts a problem. So, as soon as woman enters the home she begins functioning as the housewife ; with the expectation of the child appears the mother already. Mature intelligence has come to man much more slowly. He finds his place after search, after fight, and he takes a lot of time to satisfy his doubts and to march ahead. Man gains strength and success by hard struggle with his doubts. Oscillating on the waves of doubt for centuries, he accumulates a formidable load of errors which explode to convulse human history repeatedly. Man's creation founders under the waves of destruction and he has got to lay ever fresh foundations of his glory. His work undergoes metamorphosis through repeated experiments. He lives if he manages to go forward with this constant renewal of experience ; but he dies engulfed in dragging dissolution, if he fails to repair the big gaps of his errors which crack the very structure of life. Such creation and dissolution mark the history of man-made civilisation from its very beginning. Meanwhile woman, as the ambassador of Nature, continues steadily in her work of creation, as lover, as mother ; and from time to time, she too starts conflagrations in human society, through the concussion of terrific impulses. Her catastrophic impulses are like Nature's own calamities, fire and whirlwind, sudden and suicidal.

Man is ever a new-comer to his own world. He has repeatedly built anew his own laws and regulations. His path was not paved by the Creator ; he has got to build ever new roads in different times and places. The path of one age became a blind alley in another ; its progress was reversed and the path disappeared.

The main current of woman's life, on the other hand, flows along a broad uniform channel amidst the rise and fall of new civilisations. She was not permitted to experiment with the wealth of her heart advanced by Nature ; she cannot afford to speculate, with ever inquisitive intelligence in ever new undertakings. She is conservative and ancient.

Man is obliged to move from office to office canvassing his goods and most men are obliged to take to some profession which is rarely approved by their talents but is just enough for earning a livelihood. So man must learn by hard work to ply many trades, and three-fourths of them do not attain success they deserve. But the work that woman undertakes as housewife and mother, is her proper work, congenial to her nature.

Man attains greatness by overcoming obstacles and conquering the hostile surroundings with his powers. But few are the men who succeed in that unique way. On the other hand, we find, in almost every home, many such women as have fertilised society with the nectar of their heart. For their wealth of affection is naturally derived and they are trained by nature, even if not educated in schools. But those women who, unfortunately, are deprived of that wealth of affection, are frustrated in their social life, however much they try to improve by artificial education.

There is, however, a danger in easily acquired assets, which are tempting to others. The naturally wealthy countries are liable to be conquered by powerful states, while it is easier for less fertile lands to remain independent. Man is ever proud to capture and put into cage birds with lovely plumage and sweet voice. That the charm of the birds belongs to the whole forest is forgotten by greedy man. So man, for ages, has kept under strict control, for his personal needs, the expert service and tenderness of woman as his personal property. And such a bondage has become easy because of the innate proneness in woman for obeying discipline.

Tending life is a personal obligation and it can seldom function in an impersonal way. That joy in nurturing life, however, is not comparable to the joy of realizing a great truth. There is a tender dexterity about woman, but it has not sufficiently realized itself in and through creative work. Her intelligence, her judgment and her conduct are circumscribed for ages, by sharply defined limitations. She has no opportunity to verify

her knowledge and belief by appeal to larger experiences of Truth. That is why she has offered, indiscriminately to all sorts of superstitions, her baseless fear and her unworthy devotion. Such a blind attachment appears ruinous when seen from its countrywide prevalence ; to carry its dead weight and to go forward along the path of progress seems to be almost impossible. Not that the number of men of perverted intelligence is negligible with us ; they are creatures of the crude female intelligence and such men are the worst tyrants in their dealings with women. The blind spirit of woman is the mainstay of those institutions of our country which thrive on distorted judgment. That is how mental prison-houses are growing all over our country, with their foundations getting stronger from day to day.

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When we were young the womenfolk used to move about in palanquins and we may call that our palanquin age. Over that palanquin was flung a rich coverlet, if the ladies came of high family. My eldest sister was one of the first batch of girl students to join the Bethune College. She used to go in a palanquin with its doors open, which disturbed the peace of mind of many conservative aristocrats, fastidious of their family decorum. Even to wear a blouse or chemise was a sign of coquetry in those days of just "one saree for one female" ; and it was not an easy affair for women to maintain that lofty standard of decency and to travel abroad in railway compartments.

That "covered palanquin" age has receded to a remote past ; it has slipped away rather fast. No conferences were needed, for the change took place with the change of our surroundings. The marriageable age of our girls also began to shoot up quite naturally. When the water-level of a river rises, the banks tend to expand with the volume of water, by natural laws. The same thing is happening in the life of our women ; the bounds of the bank are expanding, for the rivulet is growing into a mighty river.

Such a change in external behaviour could not, however, have taken place through external causes only ; the inner nature was also reacting. The same mind which was hitherto confined within family requirements, ceases to be static and begins to respond to the claims of a wider basis of life. At this stage woman may commit many errors but she will outgrow them by gradually clearing the hurdles. There may be disharmony at every step of this transition from fixed and accustomed judgment to new habits of thinking which may bring, in its wake, sorrow and danger ; but no such fear can withhold the forward march of time. So long as women were confined within their narrow family limits, they could manage their affairs easily, guided by their natural feminine instincts, without the need of a special education. That is perhaps why there was at that time so much opposition to female education and why there cropped up so many comedies and parodies on that theme. Men in those days zealously encouraged old fashioned ideas, beliefs and conduct among women which they themselves flouted with impunity. Men behaved as all autocratic rulers do, betraying the same mentality. They knew that ignorance and prejudice create the best opportunity for despotic rule whose aim is to deprive its subjects of their natural human instinct of self-help and to keep them in stupidly complacent ease. Even today there are not wanting men in our country who think and feel in this fashion, though they cannot prevail in the long run in the unequal fight with the time-spirit.

That spirit is operating on the life of our women and is naturally expanding its limits. Women are at last discovering their place in the heart of this free world, and with it the need to educate themselves in self-defence and to uphold their self-respect. Many obstacles in their path are vanishing before our eyes. Women of high families are regarding illiteracy as a matter of shame which makes them feel as uncomfortable as they previously felt when using an umbrella or a pair of shoes. As against the discredit of being uneducated, it is nothing to be chaffed for their

lack of skill in making curry-powders or in dressing vegetables. In other words, the plea that a girl's worth is exhausted by her domestic qualifications is not accepted by the chief valuers in the marriage market. The worth of a girl is more and more being ascertained with reference to her proficiency in that knowledge which is universal and which transcends the limits of our immediate daily needs.

It is by this process that the mind of our women is transcending the limits of our little family and beginning to reach the large expanse of the world-society. There was a time when this earth was shrouded in the misty mantle of her hot exhalations. She could not then find her place in the midst of the huge heavenly constellations. At last the sun's rays found their way to the earth, and with the liberation from obscurity came directly the age of glory to this earth. In the same way the mind of our women was once smothered in the dense vapour of sentimentality around their own home ; but today a new light has penetrated which is of the open sky and which is for the entire mankind. Though women are not yet completely liberated from the ancient prejudices which obscured their mind, big gaps are visible. How big these gaps are can be best appreciated by those who, like us, belong to another age.

Women today are everywhere assembling in the courtyard of this wide, open world, crossing their domestic threshold. They must now be ready to accept the responsibility thereof, otherwise they would invite disgrace and futility.

I feel that a new age has dawned upon this earth. From time immemorial man had exercised special jurisdiction over society and civilisation. Its statecraft, its economic policy and its social administration were dictated by man. Behind him were women working invisibly, confined exclusively to their domestic duties. That was an one-sided civilisation which deprived human nature of much of its richness. Much wealth lay stagnant, like a miser's hoard, in the heart of women. The doors of that imprisoned hoard are flung open today.

In the infancy of this earth forests grew upon the primeval sediments of clay. Those forests stored within the trees the sun's rays for millions of years. Then the forests were submerged and lay hidden for ages getting transformed into coal. When the doors of that subterranean world were opened, man received back those stored-up solar energies, unused for ages, in the form of coal and applied them to his own needs, and so, with a new and all-conquering energy, man inaugurated a new age.

Such things have happened with regard to the external material wealth of man. Today a special mine of our spiritual treasure has opened itself to others. Women of our own limited household are appearing as colleagues of a world-womanhood. Through the collaboration of this new mind with ever-creative human mind, we attain new strength which is operating today, visibly or invisibly. Man disturbed the centre of gravity of creation and threatened it with ruin, by attempting to build a mere man-made civilisation ; but now we may hope that equilibrium will be restored. The old foundations of civilisation were rudely shaken by violent historical earthquakes. None could stop that disintegration, for there were many factors, working for years, to bring about this crisis of civilisation. Our only consolation is this that, in the task of building a new civilisation on the basis of revolution, we have a new womanhood on our side and that women are getting ready all over the world for their new role. The veil that hitherto covered their faces has dropped, just as the mental veil that shut them out of the world is disappearing. The human society, which is their cradle, is becoming manifest to women from all sides and in different aspects. Women will no longer be satisfied playing with the dolls made in the factory of prejudices. Their natural genius for tending life will now be fully applied, not merely in their own homes but in the larger world of humanity.

The blood of human sacrifice has been used by man for ages to build the bricks for the citadel of civilisation. Individual man has been mereilessly sacrificed in order to establish the so-

called general polity ; the life-blood of individual labourers has been sucked dry in order to build the stupendous wealth of the capitalists ; the libation of the blood of helpless millions has gone to feed the flame of power of the powerful ; the chariot of state-interest is ever being dragged by the unhappy millions tied to it. This civilisation is propelled by power which offers little scope for sympathy. In this civilisation we find the apotheosis of the hunter's joy over the slaughter of countless innocent and helpless lives, and it has made man most ruthless and cruel to his fellowmen and to other beings in the animal kingdom. A tiger is rarely perturbed by fear of another tiger ; but, in our present civilisation, man all the world over is mortally afraid of his fellow-men. In such an unnatural state, civilisation gives birth to the deadly weapon which would destroy it ; which process is just begun. Simultaneously we find the terrified man trying to improvise some claptrap of Pacifism, but that would be of little avail when real peace is not in his soul. A civilisation based on manslaughter cannot last.

Let us, however, hope for a new order of civilisation. If it ever materialises, then the contribution of women will have to be fully utilised in that new creation. May the call of that new age reach the heart of women and may they not stick conservatively to the sweepings of centuries which are foul and unhealthy. Let them open their heart, brighten their intellect, and offer their devotion to the altar of wisdom. Let them remember that thoughtless blind conservatism is hostile to creative process and that the age of new creation is dawning. To share the privilege of living in that glorious age our women must free their mind from illusions, which are unworthy of them. They must lift their head high, break themselves away from the torpor of ignorance and from all downward tendencies, real or imaginary. Let women achieve that capacity—the question of achieving results may come later, or it may not come at all.

TALES OF FOUR FRIENDS*

SOMNATH'S STORY

You have always twitted me with being a philosopher, and I too have all along submitted to that accusation without protest. If woman be the only theme of poetry, and if he who is not a poet must needs be a philosopher, then of course I am a born philosopher. Women had no attraction for me, either in the days of my adolescence or my youth. That sex had no power to stir either my mind or my senses. The sight of woman neither softened nor hardened my heart. I neither loved the female species, nor feared them ;—in a word, I was utterly indifferent to them by nature. I believed that whatever object God may have had in sending me into this world, it was certainly not for woman-worship. But my eyes and ears were both equally wide-open enough to perceive how immense, how universal and how lasting was the influence exercised by women over the minds of ordinary mortals. This running after them by all men appeared to me as disgraceful as their worship by all poets seemed to me ridiculous. Had poets not so greatly enhanced the charm of this instinct which is common to the animal and vegetable kingdom alike, by setting it to music, adorning it with metaphor and making it dance to rhythm,—then man would not have become such a slave to it. When men bow down to gods manufactured by themselves, the sceptic bystander feels inclined both to laugh and cry. It is this worship of the eternal feminine which has made such a tragi-comedy of human life. Of course you have never admitted that the root of man's woman-worship is a carnal instinct in disguise. You believe that its real root is that faculty which birds and beasts and trees do not possess, but only man does,—namely, the perception of beauty. And it goes without saying that perception is a faculty of the mind, not of the body. I have never been able to

* This is the third story of Pramatha Chaudhuri's famous Bengali novel, *Chār Yāri Kathā*, which has been translated into English for this journal by Indira Devi Chaulhurani. The first two stories, along with an Introduction to the book by Prof. Dhurjati Prasad Mukherji, were published in Part III, Vol. VIII—*Ed.*

agree with you in this matter because either I am blind to beauty, or you are.

My idea is that no object produced by Nature, whether animate or inanimate, possesses real beauty. How great an artist Nature is, is apparent from this universe which she has created. Sun, moon and stars, even meteors, are all cast in the same mould ;—they are all round in shape, and not even perfectly round at that, but all slightly crooked, some elongated and others flattened. Whatsoever is perfectly beautiful in this world has been made by the hand of man. From the Parthenon of Athens to the Tajmahal of Agra, everything bears witness to this truth. Poets are in the habit of saying that God fashions their lady-loves, sitting apart with special care. But none of these lovely ladies, thus specially created by the Deity in solitude, is comparable in beauty with the marble statues chiselled by Greek sculptors. It is because my sense of beauty is much greater than yours, that no mortal woman's beauty has ever succeeded in giving me heart-disease. But in spite of my peculiar temperament and ideas, I have not been able to avoid meeting the eternal feminine on life's journey. I did not seek her,—either in the one or in the many,—but she sought me out. From her I have learnt this lesson, that the full meaning of this love of man and woman, is to be found neither in the body nor in the mind alone. At its root there is a great mystery,—both in the Sanskrit and Bengali sense of the word ; that is to say, love is both a mystery and a joke.

When I was in London, I once suffered terribly from insomnia for about a month. The doctors advised me to go to Ilfracombe. They said the air of the west coast of England caressed one's eyes and face, and ran its fingers through one's hair ; that it was difficult to keep awake at its touch, and easy to fall asleep. I started for Ilfracombe that very day. This is the journey that brought me to an unknown region of life.

The hotel in which I stayed was the biggest and most fashionable hotel in Ilfracombe. There was such a crowd of

sahibs and memsahibs, that there was hardly any room to move about, and you couldn't take a step without treading on somebody's toes. Under these circumstances, I spent most of the day in the open air, which I didn't mind doing, because it was then springtime. Inanimate Nature seemed to have suddenly become thrilled, enraptured and excited at the touch of life. The richness and beauty of this revived and rekindled Nature knew no bounds. A golden sky above one's head, a green velvet carpet underneath one's feet, an indigo sea before one's eyes, and to one's right and left only trees set with jewels of flowers, white and red, pink and purple. Haven't you noticed that in England, not only earth, sky and water, but the very air is dyed with the tint of spring? Nature makes up for the defects in her symmetry of form and harmony of lines by this brilliant display of colour. It didn't take me long to make friends with this multi-coloured Nature, under this open sky. Its company was quite enough for me; not for a moment did I feel the want of a human companion. I don't think I exchanged a word with any human being for three or four days; I did not know a single person there, and it was not in my nature to try and pick up an acquaintance with anybody.

One evening when I was going in to dinner, someone in the verandah greeted me with a "Good evening." Looking up, I saw a lady standing in my way. She couldn't have been less than fifty, besides which she was as tall as she was broad. At the same time I noticed she was wearing a shining black satin gown, and had rings of many-coloured and various-shaped precious stones on her fingers. I perceived that whatever else she might lack, she was certainly not lacking in wealth. You don't often see such a glaring instance of the *nouveau-riche* in England. After a few enquiries as to who I was, she asked me to dine with her, and out of politeness I accepted.

We entered the dining-room and had just sat down to table, when a young lady came up to us with slow and ponderous steps. I stared at her in astonishment, because in length and

breadth she was a specimen of a woman rarely to be met with even in England. She was as tall as Sitiesh, only her complexion was as white as his is black ; and in that whiteness there was not the least touch of colour,—neither in her cheeks, nor in her lips, nor in her hair, nor in her eyebrows. You could draw no line between the whiteness of her dress and that of her skin. My eyes fluttered hesitatingly for a bit, and then settled down upon the thick gold chain on the neck of this whitewashed image, and the chain-bracelets to match on her wrists. It made me think of a white she-elephant that had snapped its golden chain and escaped from some Burmese palace ! I was so flabbergasted by this apparition that I forgot to stand up and greet her, and remained seated. But I was not allowed to remain thus for long. My elderly new acquaintance rose from her chair, and introduced me to this monument of flesh and blood, with the words :

“My daughter Miss Hildesheimer—Mr.—?”

“Somnath Gangopadhyaya.”

“Mr. Gango—Gango—Gango—”

The pronunciation of my name got no further. I shook hands with Mademoiselle, and sat down. I had the nauseating sensation of having laid my hand on a lump of jelly. Then Madame began to talk to me, and Mademoiselle kept silent. Not that her mouth was shut, because she didn't speak. By no means. Teeth, lips, tongue, throat and palate were all strenuously performing their respective duties of masticating, sucking, licking and drinking. I found that she equally relished fish and flesh, fruit and sweets. I should imagine that she was not competent to join in the topic our conversation turned on.

I took this opportunity of carefully observing the young lady. Such large eyes as hers were not to be found in the face of one in a million women in Europe. And those eyes were as moist as they were large, as lack-lustre as they were immobile. Sitiesh would have fallen in love if he had seen them, and Sen would have sat down to write poetry. In your language, those eyes were large, limpid, loving and serene. In such eyes you

are apt to find affection, sympathy, love and all sorts of tender emotions. But what I find in them is the tame expression of domestic animals ; cows, goats, sheep etc. have all got that kind of eyes, which possess neither the light of the spirit, nor the spark of life. The physical discomfort caused by her presence was only rivalled by the mental discomfort caused by her mother's conversation. Do you know why she had got hold of me ?—To discuss Sanskrit theology and Vedānta philosophy. The head and front of my offending was, that I had hesitated to admit to an European woman how little I knew of Sanskrit, and that I didn't know even the A B C of the Vedānta. So that when she began to cross-examine me, I began to bear false witness. I was completely at a loss to answer such questions as to whether the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad was a part of the Vedas, and whether the Brahma-nirvāṇa of the Gita was the same thing as the Nirvāṇa of Buddhism. I kept repeating over and over again in one way or another, that there were many and insuperable differences of opinion about these matters amongst our scholars. Whether my questioner realised my embarrassment or not, I perceived that a woman, seated at the table next to ours, had thoroughly grasped the situation.

She was dining at that table with a soldierly-looking man, who was so red in the face that it seemed as if it had just been flayed. Whatever he said got entangled in his moustache and didn't reach our ears. I doubt whether his companion was listening to him either. Because though she had not turned her head in our direction even once, yet from her expression I could see that she was intently listening to our conversation. When I was debating within myself what answer to give to a certain question, I saw her stop eating and look absent-mindedly at the plate in front of her ;—then as soon as I succeeded in giving an apt reply, I saw an amused smile lighting up the corners of her eyes. As a matter of fact, this discussion of ours seemed to afford her considerable amusement. But the only question that occupied my mind was how to be delivered from

this penance of a dinner. At last when everybody rose from table, I did the same, and was about to slip away, when this German incarnation of our erudite Gārgi* said : “I have derived so much pleasure and instruction from discussing Hindu philosophy with you that I shan’t let you go. Do you know, the Upanishads are both food and medicine to my mind?” “You don’t look as if you needed any food or medicine,” said I to myself. “However that may be, you may take as many Vedānta potions as you like, made in German laboratories ; only I fail to see why I should be called upon to compound the mixture !” “I have studied the Vedānta with Deussen in Germany,” she continued, “but my master didn’t know even a quarter of the names of commentators which you have mentioned or the numerous schools of philosophy which you know of. Studying the Vedānta is like climbing the Himalayas of the thought-world, and Sankar is a very Gaurisankar† of wisdom ! How peaceful it is there, how cool, how white, how high,—the very thought of it makes one dizzy. I had no idea that Hindu philosophy was as broad as it is high. Come along, I must take down the names of all these unknown savants and unfamiliar works.”

This proposal made me quake in my shoes, because our Sāstras say : “Speak a hundredfold, but write not”—what is untrue. I need hardly say that of all the books I had named not a single one existed ; and though the scholars whose names I had mentioned, existed in the flesh, yet not one of them happened to be versed in the Sāstras. All the teachers, priests, fortune-tellers, genealogists and astrologers, even Brahmin cooks of my acquaintance, had become great scholars with high-sounding titles, by my kind favour. Under the circumstances I was hesitating what to do, whether to go or stay, when the lady sitting at the next table rose and came up to me with her face wreathed in smiles, saying—“Hallo ! you here ? How are

* A learned woman of ancient times.

† A very high mountain peak.

you ?—It's so long since we met. Come, let's go to the drawing-room, I've heaps of things to say to you."

I followed her without a word. From the very first I noticed that she was lithe and sinuous like a hunting *Cheetah*. Meanwhile I stole a look at Gārgi and her daughter, and saw that they were both gazing at us in astonishment, as if somebody had snatched away the pretty morsel from their mouth, and so quickly too that they hadn't even had time to shut it !

As soon as we entered the drawing-room, my saviour, turning her head round slightly, said, "I couldn't stand any longer the torture you were being put to for the last hour, so I have rescued you from the clutches of those two German animals. You don't know what a great danger you've just escaped. No sooner had the mother's philosophy ended, than the daughter's poetry would have begun. You don't know these ragdolls of women. The one idea of these feminine jewels is to hang on to some man's neck, by hook or by crook. When they see a man their mouths water, and their eyes grow moist, especially if he happens to be good-looking."

"Many, many thanks," said I. "But there was no fear in this case of the latter danger."

"Why not ?"

"Because I am beyond the reach not only of these, but of all women."

"How old are you ?"

"Twenty-four."

"Do you mean to tell me that until now, not a single woman has attracted your eyes, or impressed your mind ?"

"That's what I mean."

"What you've been saying all this time goes to prove that you have raised lying to a fine art."

"That is only under great difficulties."

"Then it is really a fact that nobody has hitherto succeeded in awakening your interest ?"

"Yes, it is a fact. Because my eyes and heart have both been captivated for all time by a certain person."

"Is she beautiful?"

"No woman in the world can compare with her."

"In your eyes?"

"No, in the eyes of all who have eyes."

"Do you love her?"

"I do."

"Does she love you?"

"No."

"How do you know?"

"She is incapable of loving."

"Why?"

"She has no heart."

"And you love her in spite of that?"

"I love her not in spite of it, but because of it. To be loved by others is a nuisance—"

"May I know her name and address?"

"Certainly ; her address is Paris, and her name Venus de Milo."

On hearing this reply my new acquaintance kept silent for a moment, then laughed and asked :

"Who taught you to talk?"

"My own mind."

"Where did you get that mind?"

"From my birth."

"And you believe that this mind of yours will never change?"

"Nothing has yet happened to make me change that belief."

"If Venus de Milo should come to life?"

"Then my infatuation would come to an end."

"And if any of our hearts should turn to stone?"

Upon this I looked at her face carefully. My statue-trained eyes were not hurt or dissatisfied thereby. Looking away

from her, I replied : "Then perhaps I should become her worshipper."

"Not worshipper, but slave."

"So be it."

"If I'd known you could talk such a lot of nonsense, then I wouldn't have rescued you from those people. A person who is so ignorant of life is only fit to jabber philosophy. Come along now, shut your mouth and play chess with me like a good boy."

As this proposal made me hesitate, she said : "I didn't snatch you away from them for your benefit, but for my own selfish ends. I am mad on chess. As the game comes from your country, you're sure to play it well. That's why I couldn't resist the temptation of capturing you."

To which I replied : "Perhaps somebody else will catch hold of me next and say 'Come and show us some of your jugglery ; since you come from India, you are sure to know magic.'"

She smiled and answered : "You are not such a tempting object that all the women in the hotel should be mad to secure you ! However, you needn't be afraid that anybody else will snatch you away from my hands. And if you happen to know magic, then it is we who should be afraid."

I had once got myself into great trouble by saying I knew Hindu philosophy, so this time I frankly confessed : "I don't know how to play chess."

"Why only chess ?—I see you don't know a good many games played in this world. Since I've taken you in hand, I shall teach you and make you play them."

After this, both of us sat down to play chess. My instructress began to tell me in detail the names and movements of the different pieces. Of course I knew it all, yet I pretended ignorance, because I rather liked talking to her. Until then I hadn't met a single woman who could talk naturally to a man, who didn't throw a veil of artificiality over all her words and acts. As a rule women, to whatever nation they may belong,

can't uncover their minds before us men. This was the first time I saw a woman who could talk frankly and freely, like a man to his friend. I was glad that it wasn't necessary for me to speak to her through a *purdah*. So I didn't mind the process of instruction being rather long.

Though she was chattering away with bent head, I couldn't help noticing that my companion kept glancing at the verandah every now and then. Following her eyes, I saw that her partner of the dinner-table was pacing up and down excitedly with a cigar burning between his lips, and anger burning in his eyes. Evidently my friend had observed this also, for it was obvious that this person was pressing like a weight on her mind. It must have taken half-an-hour or so for her to explain the movements of all the pieces to me. Then we began to play. Within five minutes I perceived that we were both equally proficient, and that it would take us the whole night long to finish a game. If you have to think five minutes before making each move, and then retract it, you can imagine what progress the game will make. However that may be, about half-an-hour later the soldierly-looking man suddenly came into the room, and standing by the chess-table, said to my partner in a most irritated tone of voice :

"Well, I'll be off then."

To which the lady replied in a very absent-minded manner, with her eyes fixed on the chessboard : "So early ?"

"What d'you mean by early ?—It's past eleven."

"Really ? Then you'd better go—don't stay any longer. You'll have to ride six miles."

"Are you coming to-morrow ?"

"Of course, that's agreed. I shall be there by ten."

"You'll keep your promise ?"

"I can't take a Bible oath for you."

"Good-night."

"Good-night."

The man went away, then came back for some reason or other. After standing quietly for a moment, he asked : "Since

when have you become so fond of chess?" "Since this evening," came the reply. Upon this John Bull gave a grunt and strode away.

My companion immediately overturned the chess-board and broke into peals of laughter, which sounded as if someone had run his fingers very lightly over the highest octave of a piano. At the same time her whole face lit up, as if a spring of life had welled up from within and overflowed into the whole atmosphere. The lamps in the room suddenly laughed brightly. The flowers in the vases took on a fresh bloom. And together with all this my mind too was strung up to a higher key.

"Now you see why I wanted to play chess with you?"

"No."

"To get away from that person. Otherwise do you think I would ever sit down to play chess?—There's no sillier game on the face of the earth. Spending the whole day with a man like George makes one feel drowsy both in body and mind. To hear him talk is just like taking opium."

"Why?"

"Because he's got opinions about everything, but no mind. That kind of person has worth, but no charm. They are as fit to be the husbands of women, as they are unfit to be their companions."

"I don't quite follow you. Aren't husbands the lifelong companions of their wives?"

"They may be so for life, and may not be so for even a day—which often happens."

"Then what quality makes them ideal husbands?"

"Strength both of body and character, so that they can bear with ease the burden of life. They are by nature exactly your opposite. They don't think—they act. In short, they are the pillars of society, not pictures or statues with which to decorate a room, like you people."

"It may be that a certain class of people are made of stone outside and lead inside, and that they are the real men,—but

may I ask how you have found out my real nature on such a short acquaintance ?”

“Of course. Look well into my eyes, and you will find a light there, by which you can see right into men’s hearts.”

I looked and noticed that her eyes were made of what we call “lausania”. Do you know what that is ? It is a kind of precious stone, which is called cat’s-eye in English. It has a line like a thread of light, and changes colour every moment. I soon turned away my eyes, for fear that the light would really pass through them into my heart.

“Now do you believe that my eyes are penetrating ?”

“Whether I believe it or not, I don’t mind admitting it.”

“D’you want to know what the real difference is between you and George ?”

“I think we all want to know how our mind looks in the mirror of another’s.”

“I’ll explain it with the help of a simile. George is like the castle in a game of chess, and you are like the bishop. He wants to move forward in a straight line, and you crosswise.”

“Which of the two would you rather play with ?”

“They are both the same to us. When we bear down on them, they are both obliged to change their course and walk zig-zag like a knight.”

“And what pleasure do you get out of harassing men like this ?”

Upon this she suddenly got annoyed and replied :

“Are you my Father Confessor that I must give you an account of all my joys and sorrows ?—If you begin to cross-examine me like this, I’ll go away at once.”

Saying which she got up from her chair. I was not used to being spoken to rudely ; so I answered gravely :

“If you wish to go, I shan’t beg you to stay. Don’t forget that it is not I who have detained you.”

After a moment’s silence, she asked meekly : “Are you angry with me ?”

"No," I replied somewhat abashed, "why should I be angry?"

"Then why did you suddenly look so grave?"

"Sitting in this stuffy room for so long in the glaring light has given me a headache," was the false excuse which readily rose to my lips.

"Let me see whether you are feverish," she said in reply, and laid her hand on my forehead. There was the suggestion of a hesitating caress in the touch of those fingers. After a moment she took them away and said: "Your skin is slightly hot, but there's no fever. Let's go and sit outside. It'll soon make you feel quite well."

I followed her without a word. If you say that she had mesmerised me, I shan't contradict you. Outside we found not a single soul. Though it was only half-past eleven, yet every body had retired. I perceived that Ilfracombe was really the land of sleep. We sat on two cane chairs, and looked at the scene before us. Sea and sky were merged in one and the same slate-colour. A few stars were shining in the sky, and wherever their light fell on the sea, there stars began to twinkle also; here and there bits of water gleamed like silver and quivered like mercury. The trees could not be clearly distinguished, but looked like patches of solid darkness. Land and sea seemed to have taken a vow of silence. The profound peace of this silent night had evidently touched the heart of my companion—for she sat still for some time, as if lost in meditation. I kept silent also. Presently she asked in a low voice, with closed eyes:

"In your country isn't there a class of people called *yogis*, who never touch either women or money, and who leave the world to go and live in the forest?"

"It's true they go to live in the forest."

"And there they give up food and sleep, and devote themselves to prayer and penance night and day?"

"So I've heard."

"And as a result, the more they mortify the flesh, the strong-

er they become in spirit,—the calmer they become outwardly, the more intensely burns their inward fire ?”

“It may be so.”

“Why do you say ‘it may be so’ ?—I hear you believe they attain such supernatural powers of body and mind, that at the touch of these liberated beings men are completely healed physically and mentally.”

“Women believe these things.”

“And why not you ?”

“I don’t believe what I don’t know. How should I know whether it is true or false ?—I have never practised *yoga*.”

“I thought you had.”

“What put such a queer idea into your head ?”

“There’s a worn look in your face and a keen look in your eyes, like those ascetics.”

“That’s due to insomnia.”

“And starvation. In your eyes I can read the signs of both sleeplessness of the mind and starvation of the heart. From the very first I noticed that expression of your face, like fire smouldering beneath ashes. When you see something strange, your eyes are naturally attracted by it, and you feel eager to know all about it. It’s absolutely untrue that I took refuge with you in order to escape from the company of George. I came here because I wanted to find out what you are.”

“You came to tempt me ?”

“When you become a Saint Anthony, then I shall become a temptress. Meanwhile I was curious to know what kind of metal there is behind the ochre-coloured enamel of your face.”

“May I know what metal you have discovered ?”

“I know what you would like to hear me say.”

“Then you know something about my mind, which I don’t know myself.”

“Of course I do ! You would like me to say—a magnet.”

As soon as I heard her say this, I realised that this answer would have pleased me, had I been able to believe it. Whether she discovered this new desire within me, or whether she created it, I don't know to this day. I was debating in my mind what I should say in reply, when she asked, "What's the time?"

"Twelve o'clock," I said, looking at my watch.

Upon which she jumped up, saying :

"Good heavens ! Is it so late ? Really, you do make one talk such nonsense ! I must go to bed now. I have to get up early to-morrow morning. It's a long way to go, and besides I must be there by ten o'clock."

"Where are you going ?"

"To the hunt. Why, don't you know that ? You heard me say so to George."

"Then you'll keep your word ?"

"What made you think I wouldn't ?"

"The way in which you said it."

"That was only to snub George a little. He won't sleep to-night, and you know how hard it is for them to keep awake."

"I see you are exceedingly kind to your friends."

"Of course I am ! Unless you poke at the minds of men like George now and again, they easily flicker out. And besides, it's not very cruel to prod them either. Nobody can hurt their feelings much, nor can they hurt women in any other way than by beating them. That's just why they make ideal husbands. It's only people like you who wrangle and worry over minds."

"You seem to me to talk in riddles."

"If it's a riddle, let it be so. I'm not going to explain it for your benefit. I feel both sleepy and tired. Is your room upstairs ?"

"Yes."

"Then come on, let's go upstairs."

Both of us went inside. As soon as we reached the corridor, she said :

“By the way, give me one of your cards.”

I gave her one. On reading the name, she said :

“I shall call you Shu.”

“And what am I to call you ?”

“Make up something, anything you like. Oh, considering what a misfortune I saved you from to-day, you ought to call me your saviour.”

“So be it.”

“How do you say so, in your language ?”

“In our country, it is a goddess, not a god, who comes to the rescue of the unfortunate ; her name is Tārini.”

“Indeed, what a pretty name ! Leave out the Tā and call me Rini.”

While going up the stairs and talking thus, we came to a light. She stopped at once, and looking at my hand exclaimed—

“Hallo ! let’s see what’s the matter with your hand ?”

And following her eyes I saw that the palm of my hand was bright red, as if somebody had smeared it with vermilion. Placing my right hand on her left, she asked :

“In whose heart’s-blood have you dyed your hand ? Certainly not Venus de Milo’s ?”

“No.”

“At last you have said something that’s true. I hope the dye is fast. Because let me tell you that the day this colour fades, our friendship will die out also. Now go to bed. Sleep well and dream of me.” Saying which she ran up the stairs and disappeared.

When I entered my bedroom, I was startled to see my reflection in the glass. I looked just like a man who had taken a bottle of champagne.

My cheeks had colour in them, and my eyes were glistening with moisture, only the pupils were shining. Of course I didn’t dream of her, because that night I had no sleep.

The drama that we two began to act that evening came to an end another evening, a year later. I have told you all that happened on the first night, and I shall tell you what happened on the last,—because all the events of both days are still fresh in my memory. Besides, that which took place in between happened in my mind,—not in the outside world. One can't tell the tale of something which is not full of external events. Since I myself dare not read the medical diary of my mind for that year, I haven't the slightest intention of reading it out to you.

Suffice it to say that Rini held the invisible strings of my mind in her ten fingers like this, and made it dance like a puppet. I don't know whether the sentiment she had aroused in my mind can be called love ; all I know is that, in that feeling there was pride and pique and anger and obstinacy, side by side with the fourfold emotions of tenderness, love, devotion and friendship. The only thing there wasn't even a trace of was any kind of carnal passion. She could run her fingers over the flats and sharps of my mind, and bring out any tune she liked and whenever she liked. The notes were extra-flat or extra-sharp, according to her touch.

A French poet has said that woman is like your shadow. If you try to catch it, it runs away ; and if you try to fly from it, it follows you. For twelve months I played hide-and-seek with this shadow, day and night. There was no pleasure in this game, yet I hadn't the strength to stop it. Just as those who suffer from insomnia keep all the more awake, the more they try to sleep—so the more I tried to give up playing, the more deeply did I become entangled in the game. To tell you the truth, I was not eager to put an end to it, because in this new mental unrest of mine, I perceived the pungent flavour of a new life.

I am not ashamed to confess that I failed to conquer Rini's heart, in spite of my strenuous efforts to do so ;—because it is impossible for anyone to grasp the sky or the air

in the hollow of one's hand. Her nature was akin to the sky, inasmuch as its appearance changed from day to day. One day there would be rain and storm, thunder and lightning,—the next day serene moonlight and balmy breezes ; to-day the cool shades of evening, to-morrow the burning heat of the noonday sun. Besides, she was child, girl and woman, all in one. When she was in high spirits, and out for fun and frolic, she behaved just like a child,—pulled my nose, pulled my hair, made faces at me, put out her tongue. Then perhaps, hour after hour, she would go on talking, as if to herself, about her memories of childhood ; the scoldings she had got and the pettings, the books she had read, the prizes she had received, the picnics she had been to, the fall she had had from her pony ; when she described all these things in detail, I could see the vivid picture of a girl-mind, the lines of which were as simple as the colours were bright. Then again, she was a devout Roman Catholic. A silver Christ nailed to an ebony cross was always hanging on her breast ; not for a moment did she ever take it off. When she began to discourse on her faith, one would think she was an old woman of eighty. On those occasions my philosophical mind would humbly surrender to her simple faith. But, as a matter of fact, she was a perfect young woman, if by youth we mean the passionate surge of life. Through all her feelings, all her actions, all her speech, there flowed such a tide of life, that my soul rocked ceaselessly in its strong current. We quarrelled ten times every month, and swore by God that we would never look upon each other's face again, as long as we lived. But before two days had passed, either I would rush to see her, or she would rush to see me. Then we would forget all that had happened before—and that reconciliation would become our first meeting all over again. In this way, day after day and month after month passed by. Our last quarrel was a rather prolonged one. I have forgotten to say that she had discovered the predominant weakness of my character,—namely jealousy. Rini knew the magic spell which would kindle the fire, that sears and withers the minds of men in its flames. I had

looked with contempt upon many a man in the course of my life, but until then I had never envied anybody. Moreover, what further depths of degradation could there be for a man like me than to be jealous of a man like George?—Because all that he possessed was the power of the purse, and the power of physical strength. But Rini made me undergo even this degradation. Her behaviour on one occasion I felt to be as cruel as it was insulting. Nothing is more painful to a man than clearly to recognise his own weakness.

Just as fear makes a man dare too much, so this very weakness had hardened my heart to such an extent, that I would never have set eyes on her again, had she not written to me. I still remember every word of that letter,—this is what it said :

“When I met you last, I noticed that your health was breaking down—I think you want a change very badly. The air of the place where I’m now staying would revive a dead man. This is a very small village, there’s no place where you could put up. But, at the very next station, there are lots of good hotels. I should like you to leave London to-morrow and go there. It is now the middle of April,—if you delay, you will miss the lovely weather. If you are in need of money, wire and I shall send you some, which you can repay me afterwards with interest.”

I didn’t answer the letter, but left London by the very next morning’s train. For certain reasons of my own, I shan’t tell you the name of the place. Suffice it to say that the name of the village where Rini was staying began with B, and the name of the next station with W.

When the train arrived at B, it was nearly two o’clock in the afternoon. Putting my head out of the window, I saw no Rini on the platform. Then my roving eyes caught sight of her leaning against a tree by the road, on the other side of the platform-railing. I wondered why I hadn’t seen her at once, because the colour of the dress she wore would have attracted anybody’s

notice from a mile off,—a bright orange blouse over a jet-black skirt. On that day Rini appeared in a strange and unexpected light, like a new bride of our country. Hitherto I had never seen the least trace of shyness in the face of this woman, compact of thunder and lightning. But the faint smile that lit up her face that day was the blushing smile of shyness. She could hardly raise her eyes and look straight at me. Her face was so sweet that I gazed at it with all my eyes and all my heart. If ever I loved her it was on that day and at that moment. That day I realised for the first time that a man's whole mind can become suffused with colour and enriched in a single moment.

The train stopped at B for a minute only, I think, but that minute seemed to me eternity. About five minutes afterwards, it reached W. I put up at a big hotel by the sea. I don't know why, but as soon as I arrived there, I felt exceedingly tired. I undressed and went to bed and fell fast asleep. This is the only occasion on which I ever slept in the daytime in England, and I have never slept so well. When I awoke, I found it was past five o'clock. Dressing hurriedly, I went downstairs, had my tea, and set out in the direction of B. When I arrived near the village, it was about seven, but it was still quite light. As you know, in England in summer the day continues into night ; and even when the sun has set, its after-glow remains wrapped round the body of night, hour upon hour. I had no idea of the house or neighbourhood in which Rini was staying, but I knew that I should meet her somewhere on the road between W and B.

As soon as I set foot on the outskirts of B, I saw a woman walking up and down somewhat excitedly on the road. I didn't recognise her from a distance, because in the meantime Rini had changed her clothes. I can't tell you the name of the colour of the dress she wore ; I can only say that it seemed to merge into the evening light, as if it had been dyed in twilight.

As soon as she saw me, Rini turned her back on me and ran away. I walked on slowly in the same direction. I knew

she was sure to be hiding somewhere among the trees, that she would not surrender herself easily, and must be sought and found with some effort. Of course this behaviour of hers didn't surprise me in the least because I had learnt from long experience that she herself didn't know what she was going to do next, let alone anybody else. A little further on, I came upon a narrow path to the right through the wood, and saw Rini standing behind an oak tree beside it, so that the light filtering through the leaves fell upon her face. I kept on advancing hesitatingly, and she remained standing like a painted figure. As half of her face was in the shade, the other half looked like the profile of a Greek woman stamped on a gold coin—a profile as hard as it was beautiful. When I came up to her, she covered her face with both hands. I went and stood before her. Neither of us spoke a word.

I can't say how long we stood like this. Then of course Rini spoke first,—because she could never keep silent for long,—especially in my company. Her tone foreshadowed a quarrel. The first remark was : “Go away. I don't want to talk to you, I don't want to see your face.”

“May I know how I have offended ?”

“Why did you come here ?”

“Because you wrote and asked me to.”

“That day I was feeling miserable. I wrote to you, because I was so lonely. But I never thought you would rush here, as soon as you got my letter. Do you know that if my mother hears I'm fooling about with a black man, I shall have to leave the house ?”

The word “fooling” struck on my ears disagreeably, so I said with some asperity : “So I have heard before from your own lips. God alone knows whether it is true or false. But do you mean to say you didn't think I would come ?”

“I never dreamt you would.”

“Then whom did you go to meet at the station, when the train was due ?”

"Nobody. I went to post my letters."

"Then why did you wear a dress that could be seen from a mile off by a blind man even?"

"In order to attract your favourable notice."

"Favourable or unfavourable, it was to attract my notice."

"You believe that I can't live without seeing you?"

"How can I say that! Here you have been hiding your eyes all this time."

"That's because I can't bear the light. My eyes hurt me".

"Let me see what's the matter with them," said I, and tried to remove her hands from her face.

"Take away your hands," said Rini, "otherwise I shan't open my eyes. And you know that you are not a match for me in strength."

"I know I'm not George, I can't force open anybody's eyes."

Upon this Rini took her hands off her face and said excitedly, "Nobody need be anxious to open my eyes. I'm not blind like you! If you had the power of seeing into anybody's mind, you wouldn't have worried me like this every now and then. Do you know why I was vexed?—Because of your clothes. I didn't want to see you to-day in those clothes, that's why I shut my eyes."

"Why, what's wrong with my clothes? This is my best suit."

"What's wrong is that they're not the clothes in which I saw you first."

As soon as she said this, it struck me that Rini had on the dress in which I had first seen her at Ilfracombe. I replied somewhat awkwardly: "It never struck me that it mattered to you what clothes we men put on."

"No, of course we're not human beings, we have no eyes. Perhaps you think it doesn't matter to us whether you are handsome or ugly?"

"That's what I do think."

"Then what's the attraction that drags me after you like this?"

"That of looks?"

"Of course! Perhaps you think it's your conversation that has fascinated me? I confess I'm extremely fond of hearing you talk, and what's more, it goes to my head. But before I heard your voice, in that evil moment when I first set eyes on you, I knew at once that a new trouble had come into my life, that whether I wished it or not, your life and mine were bound to come into painful and abiding contact."

"You never told me all this before."

"These things are meant to be seen with one's eyes, not heard with one's ears. Have I not good reason to call you blind? Now you have heard it, let's go and sit by the sea. To-day I have much to tell you."

The path we took was as narrow as it was dark, in the shadow of the big trees on either side. I kept stumbling at every step. Rini said, "I know the way; hold my hand and I'll lead you safely to the seaside." So I took her hand and walked along the dark road in silence. I felt that her mind was becoming calm and subdued under the influence of the darkness and the solitude; and events soon showed that my surmise was correct.

After about ten minutes, Rini said:

"Do you know, Shu, your hands are much more truthful than your face?"

"Which means?"

"Which means your hands betray that which your face conceals."

"And what may that be?"

"Your heart."

"And then?"

"And then, the electricity that is in your blood rushes through the tips of your fingers! At their touch it courses through one's whole body, and tingles in one's veins."

"Rini, why insist on telling me all these things today ? It won't touch my heart, it will only add to my vanity. As it is, I'm conceited enough ; what's the good of increasing the dose ?"

"Shu, I don't know whether the beauty which has fascinated me belongs to your body or to your mind. Your mind and character are very clear in some parts, and very obscure in others. The stamp of your mind is on your face. It is this chiaroscuro picture which charms my eyes and attracts my mind so much. However that may be, to-day I am telling and will tell you nothing but the truth ; though I stand to lose something and gain nothing by inflating your conceit."

"What will you lose ?"

"Whether you know it or not, I know that all your cruel treatment of me was caused by your egotism and nothing else."

"I have treated you cruelly ?"

"Yes, you have. Let alone what happened before, you know how I have suffered this last month. Every time I heard the postman's knock, I ran to the door to see whether there was a letter from you. Ten times a day you have disappointed me. At last, unable to bear this insult any longer, I ran away from London and came here."

"If you have really suffered so much, the suffering is of your own seeking."

"Why ?"

"If you had written to me, I would have come to you at once."

"There you give yourself away. You refuse to humiliate yourself, but I must humiliate myself for you. And that's what did happen at last. I have humbled my pride to the dust of your feet, so you have come to show yourself to me, as a favour."

"Have you alone suffered ?—God only knows in what comfort I have passed my days ever since I met you."

"None but inanimate things have a right to live in

comfort in this world. Is it my fault that I have brought your dead heart to life? Your heart-strings have to be pulled hard, in order to bring out the soft tones. If this is what you call torture, then I have nothing more to say."

At this juncture we came out of the wood and saw the sea lying in front of us, like a grey desert stretching to the horizon. There was still light in the sky. By that melancholy light, I saw that Rini's face was grave with deep thought. She was gazing fixedly at the sea, but looking at nothing. In her eyes there was the desolate and infinite look of the sea.

Rini let go my hand, and we sat side by side on the sands, looking at the sea. After some minutes' silence, I asked :

"Rini, do you really love me?"

"I do."

"Since when?"

"Since the day I saw you first. My heart is not the kind that lights up slowly. It flames up in a moment, but the fire burns on for ever.—And yours?"

"My feelings towards you are so complex that they cannot be called by a single name. How can I explain to you what I don't clearly understand myself?"

"Whether you knew your own mind or not, I knew it."

"That I didn't know it is true,—but whether you knew it or not, I can't tell."

"I can prove to you that I did. You thought you were only playing with my heart."

"That's true enough."

"And you were so keen on winning the game that you strained your every nerve."

"That's true also."

"When did you realise that it was not mere play?"

"To-day."

"How?"

"When I saw you at the station I saw the reflection of my mind in your face."

"Why hadn't you seen it before ?"

"Because between your heart and mine there hung the double veil of our mutual egotism. With the raising of your veil, mine has risen also."

"I shan't even ask you how deeply you love me."

"Why ?"

"Because I know that also."

"How much ?"

"More than your life. When you think I don't love you, the whole world seems empty, and life seems to have no meaning."

"How did you come to know this truth ?"

"From my own mind."

After this, Rini stood up and said, "It's late, I must go home ; come, let me see you to the station." She walked on ahead to show the way, and I followed her in silence.

Shortly afterwards, Rini said :

"The play which we have been acting all this time should come to an end to-night."

"Is it to be a comedy or a tragedy ?"

"That depends upon you."

"Is it possible that those who cannot live apart for a month, should live apart all their lives ?"

"Then what must they do in order to live together ?"

"Marry."

"Have you considered all sides of the question before making this proposal ?"

"I am incapable of considering any other side. I only know this, that I can't possibly live without you for a single day longer."

"Are you willing to become a Roman Catholic ?"

This question struck me like a bolt from the blue, and I made no reply.

"Think it over, and let me have your answer to-morrow. There's no time to-day. Look, there's your train coming. Go

and get your ticket quickly, I shall wait for you on the platform."

When I came back after hastily buying my ticket, I found Rini had disappeared. As I was about to enter a first-class carriage, George got down from it. The train started almost before I could get in.

Putting my head out of the window, I saw George and Rini walking along side by side.

That night the state of my brain was like that of a man in delirium, that is to say, I was neither asleep nor awake.

Next morning, as soon as I came out of my room, the servant handed me a letter. The address was in Rini's handwriting.

I opened it, and read as follows :

"It is now twelve o'clock at night. But I have such a piece of good news to give you that I can't wait. What I have been wanting for a year, has happened to-day. George has proposed to me, and of course I have accepted him. Thanks for this are especially due to you. Because men like George are as eager to get hold of women like me, as they are afraid to marry us. That's why they take so long to make up their mind that it never gets made up, unless we help them a little. To them love means jealousy ; the more jealous they feel, the more they think themselves in love. George got excited as soon as he saw you at the station, and when he heard that you were to give an answer to a question of mine to-morrow, he settled our marriage without further delay. For this I shall remain eternally grateful to you, and you must remain eternally grateful to me also. Because you will realise later on what a mad thing you were about to do. To-day I have really become your saviour.

"My last request to you is—don't ever try to see me again. I know I shall soon forget you after entering upon my new life ; and if you want to forget me soon, then find out Miss Hildesheimer and marry her. There is not the slightest doubt that she

will make an ideal wife. Besides, if I can marry George and be happy, I don't see why you shouldn't be happy with Miss Hildesheimer. I've got a splitting headache, and can't write any more. Adieu."

I haven't been able to understand to this day who is the more to be pitied in this case—George or myself.

At this Sen laughed and said : "Look here, Somnath, it is only your vanity that has made you stupid in this case. What is there to understand about the matter ? It is quite clear that your Rini has deceived and made a fool of you—just as Sitesh's lady-love did to him. Sitesh's infatuation lasted only an hour, while you are still under the spell of yours. Sitesh has the courage to admit this, which you haven't, because your conceit stands in the way."

"The thing is not so simple as you imagine," Somnath replied. "Let me tell you something further then. On getting Rini's letter, I went to Paris. I decided that I would spend the remaining period of my exile there, and would come to London only to keep my terms at the Inn four times a year, staying there for six days at a time. About a month later, I was sitting in my room one evening, when suddenly Rini walked in ! I was startled to see her, and said, 'So you didn't marry George after all, and only wrote to me as a hoax ?'

"She laughed and replied :

'If I didn't marry, then how did I come to Paris for my honeymoon ?—On enquiry I learnt that you were in Paris, so I persuaded George to come here. He has gone to dine with a friend this evening, and I have come to see you on the sly.'

"Rini spent the evening talking to me. Her conversation was a report of her wedding. I had to sit and listen to every detail of that event. On leaving me, she said :

'I didn't say good-bye to you properly that evening, so I came to see you to-day, thinking perhaps you might be angry with me. But this is the last time we shall ever meet.' "

Somnath had hardly finished, when Sitesh broke in, somewhat excitedly :

"Look here, you are inventing all this on the spur of the moment ! You've forgotten you have just told us that the last time you saw Rini was at B. You have been caught red-handed telling lies."

Without the slightest hesitation, Somnath replied :

"What I told you before was untrue, and what I tell you now is the truth. I had ended there, because a story must end somewhere. But in real life many things happen, which don't come to such a dramatic end. That meeting in Paris was not the last either; after that I had many such last meetings with Rini in London."

"I don't understand," said Sitesh. "Has the thing come to an end or not ?"

"It has."

"How ?"

"Within a year of their marriage, George and Rini separated. It was proved in court that George had started thrashing Rini—not under the influence of drink, but from excess of love. Since then Rini has taken refuge for life in a convent in Spain."

"George served her right !" Sitesh exclaimed passionately, "I would have done the same thing."

"Perhaps I would have done the same also," said Somnath, "under the same circumstances. All of us possess that kind of moral courage and physical strength. 'O crux ! ave unica spera' is the last word of the human mind."

"You believe your Rini to be an innocent creature," Sitesh replied, "but d'you know what she is—maniac and swindler rolled into one !"

Somnath, who had in the meantime lighted a cigarette and was gazing at the sky, said calmly :

"I don't think I'm much to be pitied. For all true love in this world contains an element of both madness and deceit—that's where its mystery comes in."

This statement struck Sitesh as being so absurd and so heartless that he was dumbfounded. As he couldn't think of anything to say in reply, he remained silent.

Sen said, "Bravo, Somnath, bravo! At last you have said something worth hearing, something as original as it is clever. You are the only one amongst us who is capable of daily discovering new psychological truths."

Sitesh lost all patience and exclaimed, "The kind of nonsense you talk only proves how true is the saying that 'Too much cleverness ends by destroying itself.' " Somnath couldn't bear contradiction. If anybody trod on his tail, he immediately turned round and put his fangs into him. When he sharpened his words, they pierced men's minds like poisoned shafts.

That Somnath's talk did not express his real nature, is evident enough from his love-story. If there was poison in his tongue, there was none in his heart. Just as a jelly-like substance dwells within a crust-like shell, so within Somnath's hard thoughts the tenderest feelings lay hidden. That's why his cynical talk never caused me any mental trepidation; what it did cause was a slight mental disturbance only, because, however unpleasant his ideas were, one always caught a glimpse of truth behind them—which truth we don't see, because we don't want to.

We had been so absorbed in telling and listening to stories all this while, that none of us had found time to look outside. When everyone stopped talking I took the opportunity of looking up at the sky, and saw that the clouds had disappeared and the moon had come out. Its light filled the sky, and was so clear and mellow that it seemed to me as if the universe had bared its bosom to show us how tender was its heart, and how sweet. It is because we don't see this aspect of Nature every day that hope and fear, faith and doubt alternate in our minds like day and night.

Then I began my tale.

(to be continued)

TWO BIRTHDAYS*

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

ON that Birthday
With the morning's obeisance
My eyes I raised to the sunrising horizon.

The newly bathed dawn, I saw,
Put the consecration of light
On the snow-white forehead of the high mountain ranges.

The Great Distance
Who dwells in Creation's inmost heart
His image I beheld
On the throne of the Lord of Mountains.

From age to age, in majesty supreme,
The shadowy unknown he has preserved
In the trackless vast forest ;
The sky-cleaving, immense Far-Away,
Dim and difficult of access,
He keeps encircled
In a ring of sunrise and sunset.

On this Birthday,
The Great Distance, I feel, grows intense in my heart.

* Translated by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty from the Bengali original (Poem Number I, *Janmadine*).

As the starry path is distant
In the nebular, luminous vapour
Covered in mystery :
So my own remoteness
I see impenetrable, afar.
There the pilgrim moves ; his path unseen ;
Unknown the consequence.

To-day
That traveller's footsteps I hear,
From my lonely seashore.

Morning
21st February
1941.

FOLK-SONGS OF GUJERAT

By ZAVERCHAND MEGHANI

I, a research-worker of the folk-literature of Gujerat, was invited by the Students' Sammelani of Santiniketan, in March 1941, to give them four recitals on my subject.

To this hand of courtesy and honour, stretched across a distance of fifteen hundred miles, I readily responded and spent a full week among the members of that eminent seat of international learning. For five successive evenings, I found myself surrounded by an audience of youths of both sexes, drawn from different districts of India, as also a few from across the seas. They, as well as their learned professors, listened to my talks and songs with the sympathy and patience worthy of their University. The talks were given in English and illustrated with recitals of the old songs and old stories. The fact that folk-literature has a universal appeal came quite home to me when I found my audience catching the sense of these unknown songs even before they were translated.

The evening of the 12th March, on which my kind hosts honoured me with an address of welcome, was used by me for a sort of introduction to the purpose which took me to them. The folklore, I told them, was one of the main forces that were at present re-shaping the cultural and literary life of Gujerat. This folk-literature, in which the face of old Gujerat is minutely mirrored, has done for her what her history could not claim to do. There are a number of things which History, the Man, does not care to preserve in his bundle of records, and which Folk-literature, the Woman, picks up and keeps in her humble rags.

What part these worthless-looking little records of folk-literature can play could be shown by an example. An eminent Gujerati writer was one of the many who scorned my labours in this field and who poured ridicule on what they termed "these

vulgar things", which I was out to revive ! This same corner of folklore, himself a renowned scholar of the history of Gujerat, recently contributed to the press an article on the communal tension in India wherein he had to quote a glorious episode of 700 years ago, not from the written history of Gujerat, but from her oral folklore. It is the episode of two warriors, named Isā and Āsā, the former a convert Moslem and the latter a pious Kshatriya, whose death set the seal of blood-relationship between the two great clans to which they belonged. The whole story, to which this gentleman has referred, and which I, in one of my collections, have preserved, is briefly thus : In the neighbourhood of Gujerat there is a province named Sind. There lived a Moslem clan, named the Jats. The chieftain of the Jats had a beautiful daughter, on whom fell the covetous eye of Sumrā, the Moslem king of Sind. The chieftain refused the king's demand for the damsel ; he thereby incurred the latter's wrath, and was given six months' notice to surrender. The Jat chieftain fled the country with his clan, went from one kingdom to another for shelter. No king, Hindu or Moslem, dared to harbour this enemy of the fiercely dreaded Sumrā, except the Parmar Rajputs, the rulers of a small principality of Muli in Kathiawar (which is a district of Gujerat and a peninsula of hoary antiquity on the westernmost shores of India and the mainspring of Gujerat's folk-literature). Close upon the heels of the Jats came the invasion of the Sindhi king. The Parmars and the Jats offered a combined armed resistance, but being fewer in number and far poorer in resources, they fell to the invader's sword. Two out of these dead and dying were lying on the slope of a hill, gasping for their last breath : Isā, the Jat, and Āsā, the Parmār. The dying Āsā, as he was gazing at his Moslem comrade, a little upward the hill, saw that Isā was mustering all his final strength to do something strange : Isā was trying to pile a little earth across the flow of his own blood that ran into the direction of Āsā. "What doest thou, O Isā ?" asked Āsā. Isā replied, "I am preventing my Moslem blood from touching yours, lest it pollute a Hindu

Rajput's holy death." The remark of Āsā upon this noble act of his Moslem comrade is preserved by folklore in a couplet, transmitted by oral word from generation to generation :

"Listen, Isā, (Āsā says,) build no wall between us while dying : See the Jats and Parmārs as one. Do not re-boil that which is cooked already."

The old lore, which contains messages like the above to the present times, cannot be said to have perished. As I just said, its revival is a factor that is for the last few years richly contributing to the renaissance of Gujerat. The peak of Gujerat's glorious past was achieved in the reign of Siddharaj Jaysinha of the Solanki Dynasty. It was, however, not the glittering sword of that glorious empire-builder, but a literary work of a contemporary ascetic that was carried on a gorgeously decorated elephant's back in a public procession and given a niche in the temple of Pātan, the capital of Gujerat of those days. The emperor, feeling ashamed that despite all his great conquests the scholars of Gujerat had no grammar of their own, asked if no grammar could be produced to replace the borrowed ones of the neighbouring lands. "Yes, Sire !" answered the young Jain monk Hemchandra, who eventually gave Gujerat a unique grammar.

It was the first manuscript of this work that the emperor's best elephant bore on its back amidst national rejoicing ; and it is not the emperor but the monk, the learned author of that work, whose anniversary the present-day Gujerat is proud to celebrate. In that lies the testimony of Gujerat's traditional love for learning, as opposed to its dislike for conquests.

I have come to you not in order to parade the superiority of our stock of folklore, but to compare my notes with yours, to discover the points of contact between your old lore and ours. In fact, it was for this purpose that the Poet, about eight years ago in Bombay, extended his gracious invitation to me after listening to my recital of some folk-songs. In coming here I feel as if I bear on my shoulders the mission laid that day by the Poet.

I am told of the singing contests of folk-poets (*kavi-gān*) as they obtain even to-day in Bengal, which reminds me of similar contests in my native land, Kathiawar. In the public fairs and around the sacred public fire of the spring-festival such contests used to take place between two opposite camps of folk-singers. The most memorable among these contests was the one that was once held at the foot of Mount Girnar, at the Mahashivratri fair. The singers were, strangely enough, a Bohra Moslem, named Lukman, on one side, and a Hindu Mer woman, on the other. (Mers are a peasant-warrior clan in Kathiawar.) Between these two singers the contest lasted for two days and nights, without a break. They alternately recited the old pieces of folk-poetry, known as Duhās and Sorthās, and extemporized their own when the old stock was exhausted. Throngs of rural people sat witnessing this poetic combat and I need hardly say that finally the palm of victory was carried by the Mer lady. Both physically and poetically she sustained longer than her male adversary.

The Poet of India has ceaselessly sung to us a mighty hymn, "We are the sons of the Deathless." This truth is forcefully borne out by the world's folk-literature. Mankind as a whole has successfully challenged the hand of destruction by incessantly creating art, literature, culture, and bequeathing them to every successive generation. People have refused to die in spirit, they have clung to life with tenacity and love.

— This love for living would have meant mere cowardice, were it not for the fact that men, even in the lowliest of their lot, have striven to fortify and beautify life in myriad ways. Their songs and their stories, their parables and proverbs, their ballads and tales of chivalry, were, so to say, a ceaseless embroidery on their otherwise dust-ridden, dreary struggle for existence. I have looked into these songs as living and life-giving creations, breathed out by the beautiful soul of the people. That soul did not belong to half a dozen talented and inspired poets, but to the 'folk', the entire mankind.

These folk were mostly unlettered and were being ground down between the two stones of the oppression of the rulers and the tyranny of the priesthood. Into this doubly darkened chamber of their life the folk-mind lighted the lamp of its own indigenous oral literature. The rays of this lamp illumined every home and every heart, and were passed on from generation to generation.

These songs filled almost all the functions and stages of folk-life with music and poetry. Let us examine them one by one.

SONGS OF PREGNANCY

The following song relates to the first pregnancy of a married woman in the seventh month of pregnancy. The expectant mother was seated before Rannāde or Rāndal (the queen of the Sun-god), who was invoked by a group of women to bestow a son on the pregnant one.

"I have smeared my courtyard with cow-dung. Give me, O Rannāde, one that will put his footprints on this plaster. The taunts of childlessness are, O mother, unbearable.

"Having finished the grain-crushing in my mill-stones, I stand up and pause. Give me, O Rannāde, the one that will pull down the pile of flour (gathered around the stone). The taunts of childlessness are unbearable.

"I stand and pause as I bring home my pitchers from the well. O Rannāde, give me one who will catch hold of the fringe of my garment to prevent me from going again. The taunts of childlessness are unbearable.

"I churn the curd and pause. Give me one who will ask for butter. The taunts. . . .

"I bake the bread and pause. Give me one who will cry for the tiny baby-loaf. The taunts. . . .

"I have put on my hard-washed *Sādlo* (long piece of

cloth, wrapped around the whole body.) Give me one who will render it dirty by jumping on my lap."

Obviously the song is intended to give poetic expression to the longing of the expectant mother for a vigorous, healthy baby. The song in question is, down to this day, part of a necessary ceremony in the celebration of the first pregnancy in every Hindu home.

LULLABIES

Out of the good many cradle-songs a mother chants to lull the babe to sleep, let us take only a sample:

"You, my darling, are a boon received from the gods. You, my sweet one, are a fruition of my prayer. Having arrived on this earth, may you enjoy long life !

"Fast did I run to God Mahadeva and offered Him flowers ; and he, thus propitiated, gave me you, my priceless one.

"You are, O my darling, my hard cash, my flower and my fragrant incense. May you live long !

"Breathless did I go to God Mahadeva and offered a wreath to Parvati (Mahadeva's spouse). When she was propitiated, I got you as the wreath of my heart. O my treasure ! O my fragrance !

"Swiftly did I go to Hadmān (the monkey-god) and offered him sweet oil. He, thus propitiated, put a cradle in my home. O my wealth ! My incense ! Live long !"

We notice, as we proceed with these songs, that they, like the hearts that sang them, are unsophisticated and breathe an air of utter naïveté. Their simplicity is childlike, and their art lies in their very artlessness. Their appeal is, therefore, universal.

NURSERY RHYMES

The infant, in order to grow healthily, needs exercise of its limbs. But he or she is too young to jump. The baby is, therefore, to be helped by the mother, who of course needed a song. Here are a few out of the many:

“A piece of bread and a drop of *ghee*,
Dance, O Nanka, day and night.”

Then again a sad couplet :

“To-day my Nanko neither danced nor hopped. His jingling waist-bells are mute to-day.”

Then she vigorously makes him hop on her lap with the following song :

“Hop, O horsie, hop :
Be your big bones filled with milk ;
Hop while young.

When you are grown up you will receive slaps on the back and run off into the street.”

MARRIAGE SONGS

Thus when folk-poetry has nursed an infant into the stage of full-blooded youth, its another function is to breathe into the young heart all the yearnings of conjugal love and the manifold sentiments of a married life through scores of wedding songs.

The wedding songs have suffered least at the destructive hands of time, for the simple reason that they are connected traditionally with one or the other folk-ceremony of marriage. Though reduced to the position of mere rituals, they depict, in tender words and delicious music, the emotional and aesthetic phases of folk-life. For example, the following song depicts courtship.

“On the pearly bank of a milky pond the lad washes his clothes while the maiden goes with her pitcher.

‘Wash slowly your garment, Oh lord, splash not my clothes.

‘For at home my papa will be all wrath and mamma will swear at me.’

‘Neither shall your papa be wrath nor shall your mamma swear at you, O lady !

‘For we both shall wed in the lovely Vaisakh month.’ ”

The following song is of special interest inasmuch as it indicates the part choice played in folk-marriages:

“The girl is playing at the door. Father comes home and accosts her with a smile. (She does not respond.)

‘Why are you so pale, O darling ? And what for the tear in your eye ?’

‘Pray do not choose a tall mate for me, O papa ! A tall one will daily break the lowly ends of my roof.

‘Neither may you choose a dwarfish one for me, O papa ! A pigmy will daily be kicked by all and sundry.

‘Pray do not choose a fair-skinned mate for me, O papa ! A fair one will always indulge in self-praise and scorn at me for being less beautiful.

‘Nor may you choose a dark one, O papa ! For the dark one will put our house to shame.

‘Choose, therefore, O father, a brown, slender-waisted one, for ’tis him that my friends, my companions at the river-bank, have approved, and my brother’s wife has approved the most.’ ”

Many are the songs, which, like the above, depict the element of choice in marriage ; many others pertain to family duties, social obligations, physical charms, corn, garments, flowers, marriage-deity, etc. Most poignant are those that deal with the parents’ farewell to the bride and their advice to the daughter to bear the sorrows of the joint-family life. Songs of mutual jokes and even abuse between the marriage parties are in vogue. Some of them reach the point of vulgarity. Beauty and ugliness, religiosity and sensuality, laughter and lamentation, free-will and force, all stand side by side in the whole group of wedding-

songs. They seem to denote the merging of manifold influences, brought upon folk-life by the various marriage-systems to which the folk succumbed as time passed on. From this point of view the marriage-songs serve as the most reliable and untampered social evidence.

Of peculiar interest is a song relating to the auspicious letter-writing. On the fixing up of the date of marriage the bride's father writes the auspicious message to the bridegroom's father, inviting him to arrive with the wedding-party on the fixed day. Curiously enough the song that is sung at this ceremony by the women-folk depicts the bride herself as the writer of the message directly to the bridegroom.

"Minute after minute the fair beloved sends the letter. 'O princely groom, come soon. Come quickly, O handsome love, ere the auspicious wedding-moment slips away.'

"(Comes the reply) : 'I am not going to marry under the arch of leaves ; and I shan't marry a moment later. Instantly prepare the arch of precious coconuts. . . .'

"(The bride sends the reply) : 'None of my people went begging at your door. None was over-zealous to make you a son-in-law. It was you, the dweller of the barren soil, the soles of whose bare feet were worn away by too frequent visits to my home for obtaining me ; it was you who starved for getting me. Come, therefore, quickly, before the auspicious moments pass away.' "

Having regard to the existence of many such songs and the custom still prevailing among certain communities of writing the auspicious letter in the bride's name and addressing the same to the bridegroom, it can safely be taken that originally the sending of an invitation was an affair between the pair that was to marry.

BALLADS

Among the whole variety of songs, lyrical, mirthful and devotional, the dominant are those that tell a story. Many are

the tales of social and domestic tragedy, out of which let us take a sample :

“In one and the same village dwelt the lady’s parents and her parents-in-law. One day she went to her parental home. Her mother asked her, ‘Tell me about your weal and woe, my daughter !’

‘The days of happiness have gone for ever, oh mother ! Miseries have grown on my head like grass.’

The young sister-in-law (sent after her to spy on her) heard this talk ; quickly she ran to her mother and said : ‘Mother ! the lady slanders our reputed family !’

The mother-in-law ran and spoke to the father-in-law, the father-in-law to the elder son, and the elder son ran to the brother (the lady’s husband) to tell the same tale, ‘The lady scandalises our high-born home.’

The husband in his agony mounted his swiftest horse and went to the grocer’s shop. He bought from the grocer’s shop half a pound of poison, for the lady had slandered the high-born home.

He prepared the poison dose in a golden cup ; for the lady had slandered the high-born home.

He offers the golden cup to the lady, ‘Either you drink this dose or let me drink it, O my fair one’ ; for the lady had slandered the high-born home.

Instantly the lady gulps the dose down her throat, lies on bed and covers herself with her wedding scarf ; for the lady had slandered the high-born home.

They burnt her corpse with the cheapest wood, the pyre blazed in golden hue, and the silvery smoke went up in the sky ; for the lady had slandered the high-born home.

Soon the burning was over, the wretch came home, and said, ‘I hope, O mother, that now the home is relieved of congestion. Now you can run from one end to the other of this high-born home. I alone am left at the mercy of you all, unto death ; for the lady had slandered the mighty family.’ ”

PERSIAN WIT AND REPARTEE

By PROF. HADI HASAN

IN Sāsānian Persia the word "*Zib*", i. e., "bravo", "well-done", was a royal prerogative : only the King used it and even he used it sparingly, for its use involved the payment of a monetary reward. One day Nūshirwan (531-579 A. D.) saw an old man planting an apple-tree. "But you are old and weak and fragile, and you can hardly hope to eat the fruit of this tree which you are planting ?" "Even as I ate the fruit of trees which others planted," said the old man, "others will eat the fruit of the tree which I am planting." So the king said, "*Zib*." The old man realized that the use of the word had brought him a sudden and unexpected reward. "I thought," said he, "that others would eat the fruit of the tree which I was planting, but the tree being good and the action noble, it has yielded fruit in my own lifetime, even before it has been fully planted." So the king said "*Zib*" a second time ; and then he added : "I must now go, for otherwise this old man will deprive me of my kingdom."

Nūshirwan's palace in Ctesiphon, known as the *Iwān-i-Kisrā*, was sacked by the Arabs in 637 A. D. with the war-cry : "This is the white palace of the Chosroes." The sack continued off and on till early Abbāsīd times. "Oh, what will be the fate of the halls of oppression," says Khāqānī, "when this has been the fate of the Hall of Justice ?" To obtain building material for his new capital of Baghdad, the Caliph al-Mansūr decided to destroy this *Iwān-i-Kisrā* systematically whereupon Khālid, the Barmecide, put in a plea for the preservation of the palace, adding that it was a symbol of the triumph of Islam. "O Khālid," replied the Commander of the Faithful, "thou hast nought but partiality for all that is Persian." For three days, therefore, the workmen hammered at the Sasanian palace, but it was made of tough material and it resisted the pickaxe. "We

have now come over to your point of view," said the Caliph, "for we find that the cost of destruction is even greater than the value of the building material we can obtain." "I now advise you," said Khālid, "to continue the work of destruction, lest it be said of you hereafter that you were not even able to destroy what another was able to construct."

"The two most extraordinary battles ever fought," says ath-Tha'ālībī, "were, firstly, the battle between al-'Abbās and the Carmathians at Hajar wherein the ten thousand soldiers of the former perished to a man, and only their leader escaped; and secondly, the battle in 895 A. D. between 'Amr b. Layth, the Ṣaffārid, and Ismā'il b. Ahmad, the Sāmānid, wherein the fifty thousand Ṣaffārid soldiers all escaped, and only their leader was taken captive." Now on the evening of his captivity some meat was being fried for the fallen and hungry 'Amr in a frying-pan when a dog suddenly thrust its nose into the frying-pan to pick out a bone. The hot pan burned its nose, and as the dog drew back its head, the ring-like handle of the pan fell on its neck, and when it took to its heels in terror, it carried off the pan and 'Amr's supper with it. When 'Amr saw this, "Be warned by me," said he to his sentinels, "I am he whose kitchen it needed four hundred camels to carry this morning, and this evening it has been carried off by a dog."

Now about the escape of the fifty thousand Ṣaffārid soldiers a fine satire says: "O Allah, Allah, if in this business of fighting there was no actual dying, how bravely the Iranians would have fought!"¹

Persons in love either talk too much or too little but seldom they talk sense. Persian love-compliments, however, retain their flavour even in a translation:

1. I set thy beauty against the beauty of the moon in the scales of thought. The pan containing the moon flicked right

1 Agar pāy-i-marg dar miyān na mibūd, Irāniyān 'ajab jangawar mibūdand.

up to heaven, and so the moon is in heaven, and thou didst remain on earth, and so thou art on earth.²

2. Thou didst say : 'I shall show myself unto thee in thy dreams.' Reserve this favour for strangers, as those who know thee have neither sleep nor dreams.³

3. I thought to myself that I'd tell thee my heartache if thou shouldst come. But what shall I say, for the pain leaves my heart when thou dost come ?⁴

4. Art thou going ? My heart and my eyes will escort thee lest thou shouldst think thou art travelling alone.⁵

5. She is going, and the caravan is on the way. They say all manner of things as regards the soul's departure from the body, but I am seeing with my own eyes the departure of my soul.⁶

6. We are neighbours and strangers—like the relationship of the two eyes to each other.⁷

In Persia and Central Asia where the idea of the God-Man is endemic and always likely to become epidemic, it is not surprising that a man should have been brought before the Caliph claiming to be God. "Last year," said the Caliph, "a man came forward claiming to be a Prophet and we hanged him." "It was well done," said the man, "I did not send him out as a Prophet." An Ismā'ili student presented the philosopher Fakhru'd-Dīn Rāzī (died 606/1209,) who used to revile the

2. Husn-i-māh ra bā tu sanjdam ba mizān-i-qiyaṣ

Palla'i māh bar falak raft o tu māndi bar zamīn.

3. Guftah būdi Khusravā dar khwāb rukh binamāyamat

Īn suḵhan biḡāneh rā gū kāshnā rā khwāb nist.

4. Guftah būdam chu biyā'gham-i-dil ba to biguyam

Chih beguyam ke ḡham az dil birawad chun tu biyā'i.

5. Dideh-i-Sa'di o dil hamrah-i-tust

Tā napindāri keh tanha mirawī.

6. Dar raftan-i-jān az badan guyand har raw'ui suḵhan

Man khwud bi chashm-i-khwishtan didam keh jānam mirawad.

7. Bi ṭāla'yī nigar keh man o yār chun du chashm

Ham-sāyeh aim o khānah-i-khwud ra na dideh aim.

Ismā'ilis, with a purse of gold and a dagger as alternative inducements to make him renounce the habit. And the philosopher, being a philosopher, wisely chose gold. "You have been bribed and intimidated into adopting a pro-Ismā'ili attitude," said the critics. "No," said Fakhru'd-Dīn Rāzī, "I have been convinced by arguments both weighty and trenchant that it was wrong of me to indulge in those uncharitable utterances."

Subtlety, indeed, is in the blood of the Persian. "It looks as though you are seeking something," said a young man to an old man whose back was bent with the weight of years. "You are right," said the old man, "I am seeking for my youth that is gone."⁸

"For how much can I purchase this pretty bow?" said another young man to an old man whose back was similarly bent. "If you are only patient," said the old man, "you will have it as a free gift."

"When you were in your teens," said Sa'di (died 690/-1291) to a friend of his, "You were a lovely youth, but now, what has happened to your face? It is all black with your beard." "Alas!" he replied, "my face has put on black in mourning for its past beauty."⁹

An astrologer was informed that his wife was carrying on a love-intrigue. "How should you know," said Sa'di, "what is happening in the stellar world when you do not know what is happening in your own home?"

While visiting Tabriz Sa'di was asked his nationality. "I am a Shirazi," he replied. "A Shirazi? Oh the pest of the Shirazis! More than dogs are Shirazis in Tabriz." "That is curious," replied Sa'di, "for less than a dog is the Tabrizi in Shiraz."

Birds and animals which figure prominently in Persian wit and humour are the owl the phoenix, and the ass, the horse,

8. Jawāb-ash dād pīr-i-khwush takallum
Keh ayyām-i-jawāni kardeh am gum.

9. Beh mātam-i-husn-am-siyāh pushidāh ast.

the cat and the dog. "If you want my daughter to marry your son," said one owl to another, "I shall require two hundred ruined villages as her dowry." "May the king live !" replied the other owl, "I shall give you ten thousand."

Mulla Magas was instigating Shah Ismā'il the Great (d. 1524) to destroy the tomb of Hafiz on the ground that he was unsound in his religious beliefs. Now in Persian literature even as the most despicable of winged creatures is a fly, *magas*, so the noblest of birds is the *Simurgh* or *Huma*, phoenix, whose shadow is supposed to confer royalty upon people. Accordingly when Shah Ismā'il took an augury from the *Dīwān* of Hafiz, the poet uttered the Mulla's doom in the following verse :

O Mulla Magas, thou art a fly in name and by nature
Thy proper place is not the company of the Shah, the phoenix.¹⁰

"Whither away on your ass?" "To the Friday prayer."
"The Friday prayer! But today is Wednesday." "You know the day of the week but you do not know the speed of my ass. I have to mak an early start."

Notwithstanding his piety and mysticism Jāmī (died 898/1492) had a sharp tongue and was ready at repartee. Thus, on one occasion, while he was repeating with fervour the lines : 11

So constantly art thou in my stricken soul and sleepless eye
That whosoever should appear from afar I should think that it was Thou.
an irreverent bystander interrupted him with the question :
"Suppose it were an ass." "I should think that it was thou," replied Jāmī."

The horse is swift of foot, and the king's horse must obviously be very swift of foot—"so much so," says a poet, "that when it starts at night it overtakes the departed day." But even this record for speed is beaten by Anwari (died c. 585/1189).

10. Ay Magas ḥaḍrat-i-simurgh na jawlān-geh-i-tust
'Irq-i-khwud mibari O zahmat-i-ma midāri.

11. Baskeh dar jān-i-figār o chashm-i-bidārm tū'i
Har keh paydā mishawad az dūr pindāram tūi'

He had received from the King a horse which accidentally died on the very night of its arrival, whereupon the poet said : "So swift was he of foot that in one night he traversed the distance from the earth to heaven."¹²

The poet Salmān (died 778/1376) had asked the king for a horse, and a horse was given to him which was old and lazy. "I cannot be so bold as to ride this animal," said the poet returning the royal gift without provoking royal disfavour. "It is at least thirty years older than myself, and it is disrespectful to sit upon one's elders."¹³

"Conscience !" says Mirza Ali Akbar Khan Dihkhuda, Principal of the Daru' I-Funun College of Tihiran and one of the greatest satirists and thinkers Persia has produced, "when the lion hath fastened his teeth on the goat, 'dost thou know what conscience telleth him ? It says : 'O king, live long, feed well and be happy for that silly goat knoweth not that a simple process of digestion will presently transform him into a lion.'"
"When after having bathed and dressed with fastidious care," continues Dihkhuda, "two preachers were hurrying to the House of Prayer, unfortunately for them, their clothes were splashed over by a dog which was trying to escape from a runnel of water into which it had fallen, whereupon one preacher promptly closed his eyes and said : 'God willing, it is only a cat' ; and the other opened his eyes wide open and exclaimed : 'A dog in a runnel of water ! This is impossible. If it is not a fish, it is a duck. But why no scales, no feathers ? Ah, it is a dolphin which they say frequents pools and cisterns. I had read about him, but how can the evidence of the ear equal the proof positive of a pair of eyes ?' "

"The juriconsult is opposed to feminine emancipation," says the modern poet 'Ārif. "Since all that he does, he does behind a veil, how can he favour the lifting of the veil ?"¹⁴

12. Ān chunnā tiz būd dar raftār. Keh shabāshad biākhīrat birastd.

13. Gustākhi ast bar zabar-i-mihtrān nisbast. Az bandeh mihtar ast bi si sāl rāsti.

14. Faqlh-i-shahr bi raf'i hijāb mā'il nist,
Chirā keh har oheh kund hileh dar hijāb kunad.

Very similar is the attack on the physician. "If thou wert to continue as the chief physician for a year more, thou alone wouldst be living, and everybody else would be dead and gone."¹⁵

Generally the physicians of the mind and body listened with silent dignity to this kind of carping criticism and scathing satire. I said "generally", for the Safawi theologian Jamālu'd-Din Muhammad b. Husayn-i-Khwānsārī proved that liquid repartee was not incompatible with dry theology. As a judge he was in receipt of a salary of four thousand *tumans* a year. One day four persons successively put to him four questions to each of which he replied: "I do not know." "But you receive from the King four thousand *tumans* to know, yet to each question that is put to you, you reply: 'I do not know; I do not know.' " "I receive these four thousand *tumans*," said the Mulla, "for those things which I do know. If I required a salary for what I do not know, even the Royal treasury would be unable to pay it."

Similar streaks of golden humour lie embedded in the granite of Persian ethics. Says Kay Kā'ūs in his *Qābūs-Nāmah* composed in 1082 A. D.: "O son, make thyself famous as a speaker of truth so that if ever thou shouldst tell a lie, people may accept it as true from thee." And again: "Don't speak such truth as would need four months and the testimony of two hundred respectable witnesses to prove"; and: "To drink wine is a sin but as you won't refrain from it for any words of mine, so get drunk in your own house to avoid scandal."

"God hath given," says an Arabic proverb, "the hands to the Chinese, the brains to the Greeks and the tongue to the Arabs." And though it is difficult to excel the tremendous brevity of the reply of Hārūn-ar-Rashīd to the Emperor Nicephorus in 804 A. D.: "I have read thy letter; thou shalt not hear, thou shalt *behold* my reply", or the polished sharpness of the answer of the Andalusian monarch, Hakam II, 961-976 A. D.,

15. Gar sāl-i-digar ḥakīm-bāshī bāshī
Antal bāqī o kullu shayin ḥālīk.

whose parents and ancestors the self-made Egyptian sovereign Nazar Azîz Billâh, 975-997 A. D., had reviled in a long letter : "Thou hast reviled our ancestors because they are *known*, but what answer can we give?"—nevertheless repartee is more or less a speciality of the Persians, and amongst the Persians, of the Timurids and amongst the Timurids, of the Timurids of India. "Though thou hast spoken ill of me," says a Persian poet, "I shall only speak well of thee, so that both of us may have diverged equally from the truth."¹⁶

At Shiraz, Tîmûr the Lame (Tamerlane) was invited to a music-party where the star-performer was the blind harpist, Dawlat. "What's your name?" inquired Timur. "Dawlat," replied the harpist. "Can Dawlat—Good Fortune—be blind?" said Timur. "If it weren't blind," said Dawlat, "it wouldn't have come to the house of one who was lame!"

While at Shiraz, Timur had a tete-a-tete with Hafiz, the author of the celebrated verse :

Should that Turk from Shiraz return my love,

I would give Bukhara and Samarqand for the black mole on her cheek.¹⁷

"With the blows of my lustrous sword," exclaimed Timur, "have I subjugated most of the habitable globe—merely to embellish Samarqand and Bukhara, my native towns; and thou wouldst give them both away for the black mole of a Shirazian girl!" "Sire," replied Hafiz, "It is through such prodigality that I have fallen on such evil days." According to another version : "They have misquoted me," said Hafiz, "the second half of the second hemistich should be : 'two maunds of sugar and three dates'."¹⁸

The opening verse of the *Dîwân* of Hafiz :

*Alâ yâ ayyubhassâqî adir kâsan wa nâwilhâ
keh ishq âsân namûd awwal walî uftâd mushkeilhâ.*

16. Gar Khwâjeh zi bahr-i-mâ badî guft

Mâ chireh zi gham namî kharâshîm ;

Mâ ghayri-nikûiyash nagû'im

Tâ har du darûgh gufteh bâshîm.

17. Agar ân turk-i-shirâzî bidast ârad dil-i-mârâ

Bikhâl-i-hindûyash bakhsham Samarqand o Bukhârâ râ.

18. Du man qand o seh khurma râ.

comes from Yazid :

Anal-masūmu mā'indī bitaryāqin walā rāqī
Adir kāsan wa nāwilha alā yā ayyuhassāqī.

"We are surprised," said the critics, "that a good Muslim like you should borrow the very first verse of your *Dīwān* from Yazid who is responsible for the Muharram Tragedy of Karbala." "Who is there amongst you," retorted Hafiz, "who seeing a dog run away with a string of pearls won't go and snatch it from his mouth?"

Prohibition was introduced by Mubariz'd-Din Muhammad in Shiraz about 1352 A.D. "Why are the taverns closed?" asked Hafiz. "They are closed for the King's sake," was the reply. "Then open them for God's sake," retorted Hafiz.¹⁹

"Oh, do not rudely break the cord of friendship," says a Sanskrit proverb, "for if after breaking it be united a knot will remain." However, when the bond of friendship between Mughal India and Safawi Persia had acquired its knots, a Persian envoy came to Akbar's court, presented his credentials and read out in open 'darbar' the quatrain sent by Shah Abbas the Great of Persia :

The Ethiopian is proud of his African guards,
 The Turk of his Turkish spears ;
 Akbar of his vaults full of gold ;
 But Abbas of his sword Dhu'l-Faqār.²⁰

Akbar looked at Faydī. "No," said Faydī :

Elysium is proud of its waters of Lethe ;
 The sea, of its pearls ; the sky, of its stars ;

19. Agar az bahr-i-dil-i-zāhid-i-khwud-bīn bastand
 Dil qawī dār keh az bahr-i-Khuda bikushāyand.
20. Zangī beh sipāh o khayl o lashkar nāzad,
 Rūmī beh sinān o tīgh o khanjar nāzad.
 Akbar beh khazīneh-i-pur az zar nāzad,
 'Abbās beh Dhu'l-faqār-i-Haydar nāzad.

Abbas, of his sword Dhu'l-Faqār :

But the two worlds of their Akbar in *Allahu-Akbar*.²¹

Once Jehangir asked for a cup of water : the cup was so thin that it could not bear the weight of the water and broke in Jehangir's hands, whereupon the Emperor said : "The cup was fragile and could not hold the water." *Kāseh nāẓuk būd o āb ārām natawānist kard*. Now in Persian *Kāseh* means both cup and socket. "Therefore, seeing our plight its eye couldn't restrain its tears," added Qasim Khan, husband of Nur Jehan's sister Manizhah : *Dīd hālam rā o chashmash dābt-i-ashk-i-kebūd nakard*.

The task of awakening Shah Jahan from his night's rest had been entrusted to a maid-servant of Mumtaz Mahal, who, once misjudging the time, awoke the Emperor long before dawn. Thereupon, Shah Jahan lost his temper, came up to Mumtaz Mahal and said : "The head must be chopped off." "The head must be chopped off," replied Mumtaz Mahal in an impromptu verse, "of that bird who hath sung before its time, for what does this fairy creature know of dusk or dawn ?"²²

With Mumtaz Mahal by his side Shah Jahan was watching from his palace at Agra the river Jamuna leap and foam on the stones below. "To see the lustre of thy face," said the Emperor, "the river cometh all this way." "And because of your Majesty's awe," replied the Empress, "it dasheth its head against the stones."²³

The Emperor Aurangzib had no love for the fine arts. He abolished the singers who wailed loud and long before the *Jharokah* : "Melody is dead and we are going to the graveyard

21. Firdaws beh salsabīl o kawthar nāzad,
Daryā beh guhar, falak beh akhtar nāzad,
'Abbās beh Dhu'l-faqār-Haydar nāzad,
Kawnayn beh Dhāt-i-pāk-i-Akbar nāzad.

22. Sar burādan lāzimast ān murgh-i-bihangām rā
In parī paykar cheh dānad waqt-i-subh o shām rā.

23. Āb az hawāy-i-rūy-i-tu miāyad as farsanghā
Was haybat-i-Shāh-i-Jahān sar mizānad bar sangha.

to bury it." "Very well," said the Emperor, "make the grave deep, so that neither voice nor echo may issue from it."

The lot of Mughal princesses was particularly unhappy, for, as eligible bridegrooms were wanting, most of them had to remain unmarried: "I have no companion save my shadow and even that deserts me at night."²⁴

"O waterfall," says Princess Zibu'n-Nisa, "for whose sake dost thou mourn? for whose sake dost thou hang thy head in grief? And what manner of pain was it that, like me, through the life-long night thou didst dash thy head against the rocks and weep?"²⁵

When there is an eclipse of the moon, copper vessels are beaten in Persia to frighten away the dragon which has swallowed the moon: if copper vessels be not beaten, there would be a perpetual lunar eclipse. One day Nasiru'd-Din Shah, while riding out with Qa'ânî in the streets of Teheran, saw a young coppersmith so engrossed in making and beating a copper vessel that he was unaware that his handsome face was all covered with dust. "Round the coppersmith's face," said the Shah, "hath settled the dust of coal." "Therefore", retorted Qa'ânî, supplying the antiphony, "the sound of the copper vessel ascends to heaven, for the moon of his face is eclipsed."²⁶

To pass from His Majesty the King to His Holiness the Darwish. Nûrî used to meditate so intently that not a hair on his body stirred and he said that he had learnt this practice from a cat which was observing a mouse-hole and that she was far more quiet than he. Ibn-i-Nasr al-Qushûrî was unwell and desired to eat an apple, when the mystic Husayn b. Mansûr al-Hallâj,

24. Birûz-i-bikâsî juz sâye-h-i-man nîst yâr-i-man,
Wallî ân ham nadârad tâqat-i-shabbâ-y-i-târ-i-man.

25. Ay âshbâr nûhegar az bahr-i-kîstî?
Sar dar nagûn figandeh zi andûh-i-kîstî?
Âyâ cheh dard bûd keh chun ma tamâm shab,
Sar bar zamin mizadî o mîgiristî?

26. Bigird-i-'âriq-i-misgar nishasteh gard-i-zughal
Sadây-i-mis bifalak mîrawad keh mâh giriftast.

notwithstanding the fact that it was not the season for apples, stretched forth his hand into the air and drew it back with an apple which he claimed to have gathered from the garden of paradise. "But," objected a sceptic, "the fruit of paradise is incorruptible and in this apple there is a maggot." "That is so," said Mansūr, "because it hath come from the Mansion of Eternity to the Abode of Decay, therefore to its very heart hath corruption found its way." Those who were present applauded the answer far more than the achievement. A fine example of ready wit, however, is the following : A darwish put in his turban the few silver pieces which he had collected in his life and went with his disciple to a mystical dance. In the very first round of the dance, the darwish attained "hāl" i. e. reached that condition of unconsciousness when the mystic is even unconscious of his unconsciousness. Unfortunately, however, he danced so vigorously that the turban flew off his head, whereupon, he exclaimed without letting the cat of his trance out of the bag of his imposture :

What weighed on my mind, what pressed on my head,
That is gone, that is gone, that is gone.²⁷

Thereupon the disciple who had safely rescued the turban with its valuable contents shouted ecstatically :

Let thy spirit be gay : I have borne it away,
O light of the eyes of the dawn !

The chief darwish of the monastery lay dying. "I have no strength now to talk to you," said he to his disciples, "therefore let me examine you by signs and whosoever best answers the test he succeeds to the monastery." When the disciples had gathered round, the darwish raised one of his fingers. The disciples kept quiet ; but a rank outsider raised four fingers. Then the darwish raised five fingers ; whereupon the outsider showed a fist. "My test is over," said the darwish to his disciples,

27. *An cheh bar sar dastam bigusāhtam bigusāhtam.*

28. *Gham makhvūr āgā keh man bardāhtam bardāhtam.*

“and none of you but that outsider is my successor ; for when I lifted one finger signifying the One God, he replied by his four fingers that there are four Orthodox Caliphs. But as we also honour the Five Sacred Ones, the Panj Tan i.e. Muhammad, Ali Fatimah, Hasan and Husayn, I next raised five fingers ; and he, by his fist, showed that Islam is essentially a compact body.” When the disciples rushed with their master’s turban to bind it on the head of their new chief, “I am a shepherd,” said he, “and a funny fellow is your master who tells me by signs : ‘I am dying of hunger and have even lost my voice, give me a sheep.’ So I took pity on him and offered him four. Then his greed was aroused and he demanded five sheep, so I withdrew my offer and showed him my fist ; and now he has come to his senses and has sent me his turban.”

THE TECHNIQUE OF WALL-PAINTING

As reflected in the “Abhilaṣitārtha Cintāmaṇi”

By JIBENDRA KUMAR GUHA

THE book “Abhilaṣitārtha Cintāmaṇi”—“the Boon-stone of Desires”—is an encyclopaedia of all branches of contemporary knowledge. It is a compilation by a South Indian writer, Somadeva, who flourished in the 12th century, A. D. The book is merely a compendium and not an original work. It has dealt with the technique of wall-painting as one of the many branches of the then attained knowledge. This contemporaneity enhances the value of the painting-process as recorded in this book, because the date synchronises with the great wall-paintings, done under the patronage of the Cola kings on the walls of the temples in South India, whose influence travelled thence to Ceylon, as evidenced in the great frescos of Polunnuwa.

This information about the contemporary painting-process is gathered in Part I, prakaraṇa III, verses 138-191 of the “Abhilaṣitārtha Cintāmaṇi,” edited by Dr. R. Shamsastry, published from Mysore, 1926. A summary content of these 54 verses is given below :

- I. Vs. 138-140 : Introduction, paintings to be done on well-polished walls.
- II. Vs. 141-147 : The preparation of the Vajralepa.
- III. Vs. 148-157 : The preparation of the brush.
- IV. Vs. 158-164 : Direction for drawing the outlines and filling up the contours with colours.
- V. Vs. 165-166 : A list of pure colours is given.
- VI. Vs. 167-174 : A list of mixed colours.
- VII. Vs. 175-188 : Direction for the painting of various objects in different colours and technique.
- VIII. Vs. 189-191 : Different positions of the persons painted.

A summarised translation of the relevant verses is given below :

I. Vs. 138-140 : The writer begins by saying that one should employ master-painters well-versed in the subtler qualities of the line,¹ who have thoroughly attained the art of the application of colours on the crystalline walls of one's dwelling, polished like a mirror² with diverse pictures.

II. Vs. 141-147 : For the painting of pictures on walls built of lime and plaster,³ they should be cleansed of all unevenness and a preparation of the following objects should then be applied to the walls. Buffaloe's hides mixed with water should be boiled until a clayey stage is reached. It is known as vajralepa. Then (the artist) should mix white earth⁴ with the vajralepa and then it should be coated thrice⁵ over a dry wall. Then an equal amount of conch-shell powder, mixed with the vajralepa, should be coated over the wall. Then a white (substance) growing on the Nilgiris,⁶ bright as the moon, should be mixed with the vajralepa in equal proportion by hand⁷ and then thin coatings of it should be mildly applied over the wall.

III. Vs. 148-157 : The wise man should then paint pictures of diverse objects, well-lined and artistically coloured, depicting various *bhāvas*.⁸ One should choose a bamboo-stick,⁹ like the little finger¹⁰ in circumference, and then the wise man should fix a copper nail¹¹ about the size of a barley corn (on the bamboo-stick). Kajjala (black smoke as obtained from the lamp), mixed with rice-paste¹² made up to a small size, is known

1. *Śūksmarekhā Viśradatāḥ*.

2. *Darpanākṣrabhittike*.

3. *Sudhayaṁ nirmittāṁ bhittim*.

4. *Mṛttikāṁ śvetāṁ*.

5. *Trivārataḥ*.

6. *Nilagirau jātāḥ śvetāḥ*.

7. *Pāninī*.

8. *Nānābhāva rasairjyuktāḥ*.

9. *Vepu*.

10. *Kapiṣṭhikā paripāṣaṁ*.

11. *Tāmrajaṁ Śanku*. 12. *Bhaktha-sikthana*.

as the Vartikā. Hairs from a calf's ear should be fixed to a Tulikā (a brush) cemented by lac¹⁸. Then the brush is known as a Lekhanī and is of three sizes, broad, medium and fine. The broad brush is used for the application of colours to a mass and for oblique strokes ;¹⁴ while the drawing and the side strokes¹⁵ should be done by the medium brush. The minute details should be painted by the fine brush.

IV. Vs. 158-164 : When painting an animalic or a non-animalic object (the artist) should at first think over its true proportion.¹⁶ Then the experienced one ¹⁷ should draw on the floor¹⁸ the object (in exact proportion) that he has in his mind. Then he should draw this object (on the wall) with the Vartikā but without any colour.¹⁹ He then should re-draw the same drawing with a yellowish red (chalk).²⁰ Then (the artist) should fill up the contours with colours appropriate (for each part)²¹—*i. e.*, colours of different shades to illustrate the chiaroscuro (light and shade).

V. Vs. 165-166 : The following are the six original colours ; *viç.*, white from conch-shell, purple²² from red lead,²³ deep red²⁴ from lac, red from red ochre, yellow from yellow orpiment²⁵ and lamp-black.

VI. Vs. 167-174 : Pure colours mixed with each other produce mixed colours. Red lead and conch-shell (powder) result in the colour of a red lotus,²⁶ lac mixed with conch-shell

18. Lākṣa bandhana.

14. Sthulayā lepanam kāryam tiryagā hitayā tayā.

15. Parāvā niviṣṭhayā.

16. Pramāṇam.

17. Vicakṣaṇa.

18. Kṣītau.

19. Vinā rajanam.

20. Gairika.

21. Tattadrūpo citaiḥ sphutam.

22. Śoṇam.

23. Daradām.

24. Raktam.

25. Haritālāḥ.

26. Kōṭ nāda.

powder becomes the rosy colour of dawn,²⁷ while red ochre and conch-shell powder give us the smoke colour²⁸ (pale red ?). Yellow orpiment mixed with conch-shell produces a tawny²⁹ colour. Lamp - black plus conch-shell is the colour of a pigeon. Blue mixed with yellow orpiment produces *harit* (a darker shade of yellow). Red ochre and yellow orpiment is fair ; lac and lamp-black is pale grey,^{29a} while lac plus blue is grey.³⁰ The colours are both pure and mixed and (the artist) should apply them as befit the picture.

VII. Vs. 175-188 : (When painting) the creatures of different colours (the artist) should apply appropriate colours ; for instance, (when painting these creatures) black antelope,³¹ deer,³² tiger³³ peacock,³⁴ partridge,³⁵ etc. Again, the same rule is to be observed when painting a tree, mountain, branches and others. Before applying either fair or blue, yellow orpiment should be coated first,—then comes the red ochre, and lastly the indigo (blue). One should then scrape off³⁶ the (unnecessary) colours with a sharp instrument³⁷ (lest it becomes too bright) and then sprinkle pale³⁸ (yellowish white) dots on the painting. Then fill up (coloured spaces whose colours have been scraped off) with colours ; and if you then rub it over lightly³⁹ with a conch, then it will not perish.⁴⁰ Lines of various patterns like hairs should then be drawn and then rubbed over with the pointed

27. Saurāśva (*lit.* Sun's horses).

28. Dhumracchāyam.

29. Ghoram.

29 a. Pāṭalam.

30. Karbura.

31. Eṇa.

32. Śaraṅga.

33. Śārdūla.

34. Śikhī.

35. Tittirikā.

36. Haret.

37. Kṣureṇa tikṣṇadhāreṇa.

38. Pāṇḍuram.

39. Mṛdughaṣaṇa yogena.

40. Na naśyati.

lip-end of an elephant or a boar⁴¹. Pure gold should be ground on a slab and then melted in a pan. This process should be repeated again and again until all impurities evaporate. This pure gold⁴² shall then have the (rosy) hue of the sun in the early morning.⁴³ One should then mix a small quantity⁴⁴ of this golden substance (?) with the vajralepa and then this mixed vajralepa should be coated over the lekhanī (brush)⁴⁵. Then apply this brush to the spots where gold ornaments⁴⁷ have been conceived. Then rub the gold (paste) with a boar's tusk⁴⁸ until (the whole surface) dazzles like flashes of lightning.⁴⁹ Clothes,⁵⁰ ornaments,⁵¹ flowers and facial toilets⁵² should then be painted by the wise man with lac.

VIII. Vs. 189-191 : The first position⁵³ is ṛju (straight frontal position), the second is the ardharju (the back position), the third position is known as the sācī (a bent position in profile view), the fourth is ardhākṣī (the face in profile, the body in three-quarter profile); while the last one is known as the pārśvā gatam (the side-view proper). These are the five main⁵⁴ positions. And with these are included the four positions of the leg, *e. g.* ṛju, etc. and these (*i. e.*, 5 + 4 = 9) together make up the nine positions for a good picture.

41. Bṛapaṭiḥ.

42. Amalaṁ hemaṁ.

43. Bālārka ruciracchavi.

44. Svalpaṁ.

45. Hemajaṁ.

46. Lekhanya grenibeśayet.

47. Abharaṇaṁ...hemakalpitaṁ.

48. Varāha daṁṣṭrayā.

49. Vidyuccakita vighrahaṁ.

50. Vastram.

51. Ābharaṇaṁ.

52. Mukharāṅgāḍikaṁ.

53. Sthānaṁ.

54. Mukhya.

55. Rjvādi pada pūrvam.

NATIR PUJA

An Appreciation

By K. R. KRIPALANI

NATIR PUJA is one of the simplest and most moving of Rabindranath's plays. It is comparatively free from symbolic complexities and intellectual abstractions which make many of his other plays at once puzzling and fascinating. Though at least one of the characters in the play provides deep psychological interest, the main action of the drama centres round a simple religious emotion which is heightened to a pitch of extraordinary richness and nobility as the drama culminates in its tragedy of martyred devotion. Few, having seen this play on the stage, will come out without being deeply impressed by a sense of the majesty of the human spirit which, when properly awakened, invests the seemingly ignoble with the divinity of that which it contemplates.

The drama is based on the following Buddhist legend as related in Rajendralal Mitra's *The Sanskrit Buddhist Literature of Nepal* (published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1882).

"Raja Bimbisāra, receiving the knowledge of truth from the Lord, had built a big *stupa* over the Lord's nails and hairs in his *zenana*, and his maids cleansed the place every day. When Ajātasatru obtained the throne by parricide, he prohibited the females to sweep the *stupa* on pain of death. Srimati, a female slave, caring not at all for her life, washed it neatly and lighted it with a row of lamps. The king, in great rage, ordered her to the place of execution."

King Bimbisāra (c. 546—494 B. C.), as every student of Indian history knows, was a contemporary of the Buddha (c. 566—486 B. C.) and founder of the ancient empire of Magadha, with its capital at Rājagriha. The generally accepted historical version is that he was killed by his son, Ajātasatru (c. 494—462 B.C.), who seized the throne ; though, according to another tradition, Bimbisāra is said to have handed over the kingdom to Ajātasatru,

the Prince. The following version adopted by the poet for the purposes of the drama draws upon both these traditions.

Bimbisāra, having learnt from the Buddha the wisdom of renunciation and seeing his son, Ajātasatru, ambitious of the throne, voluntarily gives up his kingdom to the latter and retires outside the city to spend his days in meditation and prayer. His younger son, Chitra, inspired by the same teaching, embraces the Order and becomes a Bhikshu. The queen-mother, Lokeswari, once a devotee of the Buddha, turns bitter against a religion that has deprived her of her husband and of her son. The new king, Ajātasatru, under the influence of Devadatta, a cousin and a rival of the Buddha, forbids the practice of Buddhism and persecutes its followers. In the meanwhile, on the Vasanta Purnima day,* which is the birthday of the Buddha, Srimati, the palace-dancer, is chosen by the Order to offer worship at the shrine,—a privilege hitherto reserved for the princesses, one of whom, Ratnavali, is highly incensed at the idea of a low creature like the palace-dancer being honoured with this right, on this auspicious day, in preference to one of them. In order to humiliate the Nati, Ratnavali gets an order from the king (who had already forbidden, on pain of death, any worship at the shrine) that the Nati should instead dance before the *stupa*. Srimati accepts the order and at the appointed hour in the evening appears on the scene dressed for the dance. She begins the dance, which turns out to be one of religious ecstasy, in course of which the dancer discards one by one all her ornaments as well as the gorgeous outer garments, and is left with only the ochre wrap of a Bhikshuni. As she kneels down and recites the final verses of formal worship, her head is struck off by order of the king. The spectacle of this supreme and heroic devotion of the Nati melts even the heart of Ratnavali.

In the meanwhile Bimbisāra, who was coming to offer worship at the same shrine, is murdered on the way by the

* The birthday of the Buddha is observed on the Vaisakhi Purnima, which nowadays falls in summer but which in 600 B. C. fell in Spring (*Vasanta*).

King's men. Ajātasatru, frightened at the enormity of the crime and fearing popular upheaval, turns remorseful and revokes his policy of persecution.

How far the plot as used by the author is historical, how far legendary and how far the creation of the poet's imagination, is not a relevant enquiry. For the interest of the play is not historical, but lies in its deep human appeal and in the subtle analysis of the character of the queen-mother.

The Buddha had challenged the infallibility of the Vedas and the superiority of the Brahmins to the other castes. Worship of the Divine cannot be the monopoly of this caste or that, nor can its expression be for ever imprisoned in one particular Vedic pattern. True worship is the surrender or dedication of the best we have to the call of Truth. The sage dedicates his learning, the man of action his deeds, the poet his songs, the humble Nati her dance. That is how Rabindranath interprets the Buddha's gospel of renunciation. Upali, the Bhikshu, asks for alms in the name of the Lord at the palace gate. Srimati, the Nati (palace-dancer), alone is awake. Aware of the social degradation attached to her calling, she dare not give the alms with her own hand and humbly offers to call one of the princesses. But the Bhikshu assures her that her gift will be equally acceptable to the Lord. "But what have I to offer?" "The best you have." The Bhikshu's assurance awakens in her a sense of her essential human dignity which is implicit in every individual, in the slave as much as in the princess. Social institutions distort this fundamental equality of all human beings by their artificial standards and snobberies, exalting some and degrading others. But true religion is that which ignoring man-made prejudices restores the fundamental valuation by which all human beings must finally be measured and redeemed. As an English poet has put it :

*The soul of music slumbers in the shell
Till waked and kindled by the master's spell ;
And feeling hearts—touch them but rightly—pour
A thousand melodies unfelt before.*

And so the Nati by her sincerity and her devotion redeems the so-called degradation of her calling and vindicates by her death the innate majesty of her spirit.

Apart from the deep human appeal of this theme, the main interest of the drama lies in the psychological analysis of the character of the Queen-mother, Lokeswari. She is torn between her genuine reverence for the Buddha—having seen and worshipped him in person, how could she help it?—and her bitter wrath against a religion whose very humanity tramples under foot the claims of the human, whose gospel of *maïtri*, of love, service and compassion, works as a deadly disintegrating force, wrecking the basic order of Hindu society, “making the Brahmin do the work of a menial and the Kshattriya hold the begging-bowl,” instead of the sword. Her husband has renounced his throne, and her son his home. “To-day I am a widow, though my husband is living, motherless though my son is alive, homeless in my own palace.” Religion should uphold society and not break it, should provide divine sanction to the power of man, instead of repudiating it. *Ahimsa* may be good for the lower orders whose duty it is to be servile, but it degrades the Kshattriya, the warrior-king, whose duty it is to rule and to wield power. As she puts it, the mud has its uses but the mountain must be made of hard rock. Her royal pride, combined with her intuitive sense of the social function of religion, makes her rebel against the extreme individualism of a gospel which ignores the basic rights of flesh and blood. “Alas for this blood and flesh ! Alas for this unbearable hunger, this intolerable pain ! Is the *tapasya* (striving) of blood and flesh less (divine) than this striving after nothingness (*sunya*) ?” On the other hand, her very Hinduism has developed in her a spiritual sensibility which cannot but be moved by her vivid memory of the serene and radiant personality of the Buddha, the compassionate. Having seen him once, she is for ever haunted by the deep spiritual appeal of his personality which compels her reverence even when she would repudiate it. In her character is symbolised

the great historical drama of the challenge of Buddhism to orthodox Hindu society. As Rabindranath used to say, Hinduism could not wholly repudiate Buddhism, nor could it be replaced by it. Though formally dead, Buddhism has never ceased to inspire the best minds of India. Both Tagore and Gandhi are the two greatest, as they are the latest, testimonies to this fact. Only once in his life, said Rabindranath, did he feel like prostrating before an image, and that was when he saw the Buddha at Gaya. The Upaniṣads and the personality of the Enlightened One were the two deepest and most lasting spiritual influences on his life. Again and again he has invoked the spirit of the Buddha, in poem, song and drama. Here is a translation of the opening lines of a song from this same play, NATIR PUJA. The passionate sincerity of its words invests this song with a significance which far exceeds its dramatic appropriateness in the drama.

“The world to-day is wild with the delirium of hatred,
the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish,
crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed.
All creatures are crying for a new birth of thine.
Oh thou of boundless life,
save them, raise thine eternal voice of hope,
let Love’s lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey
open its petals in thy light.

O Serene, O Free,
in thine immeasurable mercy and goodness
wipe away all dark stains from the heart of this earth.”

And here are a few lines from a poem written five years later in 1932, on the occasion of the opening ceremony of the Mula-gandhakuti Vihāra at Sarnath :

“Bring to this country once again the blessed name
which made the land of thy birth sacred to all distant lands.

Let thy great awakening under the *bodhi* tree be fulfilled,
sweeping away the veil of unreason
and let, at the end of an oblivious night,
freshly blossom out in India thy remembrance !
Bring life to the mind that is inert,
Thou Illimitable Light and Life ! ”*

* Both the translations are the poet's own. See *Poems* : Rabindranath Tagore.
Published by Visva-Bharati.

CIVILISATION AND LITERATURE*

By NAGENDRANATH CHAKRAVARTI

IN all lands and in all ages man has ever endeavoured to give expression to his own self. At the root of all his creative activities lie this urge and eagerness to express that which in his being lies unexpressed. With a view to expressing himself fully, he has created what is known as civilisation. Its object is to bind mankind into a bond of mutual relationship ; for he who lives alone and isolated is weak and is unaware of his own true self.

Now, the purpose of "Sāhitya" (Literature) which is derived from the Sanskrit word *Sahita* (associated with), is also to unite one and all. An intimate mutual relationship is possible only through literature ; for literature knows no difference of caste or creed, time or space. It is founded on that which is universal in relation to both mankind and time. That is why even what the Chinese people have expressed in Chinese cannot but appeal to us and, as such, it cannot be ignored simply because it is something foreign ; for literature is for all. Those who are trying to hold literature in chains of provincialism have not as yet outgrown the stage of barbarity in the evolution of civilisation ; they have not as yet reached the limitless land of freedom.

The greatness of a literary work lies in its universal appeal. It must serve as a meeting ground of all people, irrespective of race or creed. To quote Rabindranath's words : "Literature is not the expression of one's own individual self. It is the expression of one's joy of creation and it becomes a successful work of art only when that joy is offered to all in beautiful form or rhythmic language." Thus a mere expression of personal sorrow or pain can hardly give that joy which is naturally

* Developed as an article from the lecture-notes of Gurudeva while he was reading *Mānasa* and *Śikṣa* with the students and adhyāpakas at Santiniketan in August, 1940.

expected of a work of art. It must rise higher than the plane of the merely personal. We have a taste of pure literary joy only when that personal delight is sublimated into universal delight. Writers, who have failed to catch that universal strain, have long since passed into oblivion ; while those, the rhythm of whose creation is in unison with the universal rhythm, have continued to live through the ages.

The greatest poets and writers of the world have always aimed at this universality of appeal. Hence it is that literature has become one of the mightiest forces in the building up of human civilisation. The progress of literature has gone hand in hand with the progress of civilisation. In other words, the creation of literature is only another name for the creation of civilisation. The personal joys of a poet are turned into a perpetual source of joy to entire mankind for all times to come. This is the poet's greatest contribution to civilisation.

But wherein lies the poet's fulfilment ? Of course fulfilment may come in the shape of worldly fame. But there is a still greater satisfaction in the realisation of the truth through his personal experience against the vast background of entire humanity. The poet adds his personal experience to the accumulated experience of the ages. According to Rabindranath, the intrinsic value of literature is measured by the extent to which it enriches human civilisation.

Of course a poet does not necessarily neglect what generally goes by the name of material gain. But he has the wisdom to know that such gain is not permanent. He would rather leave behind a lasting legacy to the unborn generations of the world. He wants to conquer death by the immortality of his creation ; for he ardently desires to live for ever. So the wealth of culture and civilisation is immeasurably greater and more lasting than the treasures of earthly kings.

To-day civilisation appears "red in tooth and claw". It has assumed a destructive force which is threatening the very foundations of world's culture. Barbarism, masquerading in

the garb of civilisation, stalks the land ; animal passion is rampant everywhere and its greatest onslaught is on culture, of which literature is one of the chief vehicles. It is tragic, indeed, that literature instead of being the spontaneous outburst of an unfettered soul, is being made to serve the interests of tyrannical and unscrupulous dictators. Literature has become a part of political strategy. These unhealthy symptoms have made their appearance all over the world. In India, too, literature is fast becoming parochial and sectarian in outlook. Communalism which has vitiated our body-politic is making its inroads even into the field of literature. This is highly deplorable.

Civilisation may have its national or provincial characteristics, but literature must transcend all geographical or national boundaries. Literary creators, therefore, must not forget that they stand for all times and for all men. A false idea of realism has, however, recently narrowed down their outlook with the result that they are introducing into the field of literature elements or tastes that are deformed. The realists imply by the term realism "something which is far removed from effort or investigation of any kind". But man's innate tendency is to discriminate. The writers of olden days did this and thus gave proof of their cultured mind. To collect indiscriminately all that is easily available is the height of unwisdom. This mentality is no credit to civilisation ; rather it will bring it down to a lower level and may even destroy it. In the opinion of Rabindranath, literature is an expression of whatever elevates man. The aim of literature is culture of the mind and its main effect is to ennoble it.

It is true that there are ugly things in the literature of every country and it is often burdened with indecent trash and the refuse and rubbish of passion ; but their scope is very limited. Such literature can never stand the test of time in justifying its existence.

Literature has its enemies too. They have repeatedly made their appearance in the history of decaying civilisations. When

the Romans and the Greeks took to a life of ease and pleasure and depended solely on their slaves, their culture and civilisation were doomed. The great poet Kalidasa has delineated this truth most vividly in his *Raghuṡamsam* where he says that the great line of the king Raghu was entirely wiped off due to the boisterous and indisciplined life of Agnivarna. Similarly the fall of the Mughals was hastened by their licentiousness. Another deadly enemy is greed. Hankering after quick and temporary achievements, men become impatient of lasting good. They want more and more and fall on each other and in the end destroy themselves. Passion creeps into civilisation and saps away its strength and vitality.

CONQUEST OF SORROW

By RABINDRANATH TAGORE

In this Great Universe
The giant wheel of pain revolves ;
Stars and planets split up ;
Sparks of fiery dust, far-flung,
Scatter at terrific speed
Enveloping in network primordial
The anguish of existence.
In the armoury of pain
Spreading on the stretches of consciousness, aglow,
Clang the instruments of torture ;
Bleeding wounds gape open.
Small is man's body,
How immense his strength of suffering.
At the concourse of creation and chaos
To what end does he hold up his cup of fiery drink
In the weird festival of the gods
Drunk in their titan power,—O why
Filling his body of clay
Sweeps the red delirious tide of tears ?
To each moment he brings endless value
From his unconquerable will.
Man's sacrificial offering
His burning physical agony—
Can anything compare,
In the whole fiery dedication of the Suns and stars ?
Such unyielding wealth of prowess,
Such fearless endurance,

Such indifference to death,—
Triumphal march as this, in hundreds,
Trampling embers underfoot
To reach the limit of sorrow—
Is there anywhere such quest, nameless, radiant,
Such pilgrimage together, from road to road ?
Such pure waters of service, breaking through igneous rocks,
Such endless store of love ?

Jorasanko,
8 November, 1940.

Translated by Dr. Amiya Chakravarty
from ROGASAJYAY, No. 5

This poem was dictated by the Poet from his sick-bed when he was himself undergoing extreme bodily pain. Through his own suffering he realised the physical anguish of the world, and also the divine unconquerable human will which turns dark agony into light. The context of the present war added a particular significance to this lyric which was composed in 1940.

—Translator.

REVIEWS

CHINESE PHILOSOPHY IN CLASSICAL TIMES

Edited and Translated by E. R. Hughes.

Published by J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., London.

No. 973 in EVERYMAN'S LIBRARY.

CHINESE PHILOSOPHY IN CLASSICAL TIMES is a vast and complex subject. It covers a period of about sixteen centuries from 1500 B.C. to 100 A.D. and includes several different schools. Up to now there is no precise book on such a subject written in English either by Chinese scholars or by foreign authors. The present writer, Prof. Ernest Richard Hughes of Oxford University, had been to China as a missionary for twenty years (1911-1931). His long stay in that country and his mastery of the Chinese language have helped him to deal adequately with such a vast subject as CHINESE PHILOSOPHY IN CLASSICAL TIMES in one volume of the "Everyman's Library" series.

The contents of the book have been arranged in eight parts, with two to four chapters to each part. The first part deals with the origin of Chinese Philosophy, "From Tribal Religion to Philosophical Inquiry"; the second part with "Mo Ti", the "Rise of Religious Utilitarianism" and "Confucius' Disciples: the Tradition of the Master Evolving"; the third part with the "Rise of Materialistic Utilitarianism and the Confucianist Reply"; the fourth part with the "Analytical Minds at Work on the Problems of Knowledge"; the fifth part with the two great Taoist philosophers, Lao-Tzu and Chuang-Tzu and their books; the sixth part with "Four Different Attempts at a Synthetic Philosophy"; the seventh part with "Religious Philosophies of Educated Men"; and the last part with the three Confucianists of the Han period, the end of the so-called Classical Times. This arrangement is neither historical nor logical. But it may be convenient for the English readers to understand the different systems of Chinese Philosophy.

Besides the main body of the text, the author has given at the beginning of the book a long Introduction, together with a short Bibliography and a Chronological Table of the philosophers. The introduction should help the foreign readers to have a glance into the picture of the life of the Chinese people and their mind, culture, religion, and philosophy. After reading the introduction, one can follow the text more easily. The short Bibliography and the Chronological Table of the philosophers are also useful to the readers.

The main part of this book is composed of translations, quoted from nearly all the Chinese classics and works of the ancient Chinese philosophers. This is not an easy task. A foreigner who translates Chinese Classics and works of ancient Chinese philosophers can hardly avoid gross mistakes unless he has perfectly mastered the Chinese language. In making these translations, the author has spared no pains. Most of his translations are reliable, though certain discrepancies must strike a reader who is familiar with the original texts. Take, for instance, the first line of the first translation in the first chapter :

"Out into the darkness I go,
Sad my heart as sad can be : "

The Chinese original is :

Chu Tzu Pe Man, Ugo Hsin Yin Yin.

The first four characters *Chu Tzu Pe Man* literally mean "Coming out from the North gate". Therefore, the English rendering would perhaps be more correct and precise if we put it thus :

"Out come I from the North gate,
Sad my heart as sad can be : "

I do not know why the author has rendered it in almost an opposite sense by putting it "I go into" instead of "I come out". It is not possible to put here all the mistakes of the translations and correct them.

On the whole the book is quite good and should be widely read.

Tan Yun-Shan.

MENTAL GROWTH AND DECAY : By N. N. Sen Gupta,

M. A., PH. D. (Harvard).

Published by Kitabistan, Allahabad. Price Rs. 3/-.

THE author of this book is widely known in India as a professor of Psychology and Philosophy and it is no wonder that the book contains fruits of erudition and research. It would seem the book is meant only for serious students of Psychology and Educational Science. Laymen will find it extremely difficult on account of its pedantic language. At the very outset the author says that "mental growth and disintegration should be estimated in terms of tests and criteria other than those that measure development, and decay in the sphere of the body." But one naturally asks : Is it not possible to devise common criteria to test both the physical and mental growth and decay of the individual ? Indeed the individual leads a psychophysical life and not a psychical and physical life. All through the book

the author has tried to show that mental growth and decay exhibit themselves in different forms in the different periods of life. To substantiate it he has utilised some data, the supply of which is rather meagre. The author, however, has himself stated in the preface that the purpose of the book is not to "supply the reader with an exhaustive array of facts." We fully agree with the author when he says that in the life of an individual there are favourable moments of growth that can be utilised for the formation of ideals and sentiments. During the adolescent period, for example, "the future course of the personality may be more easily laid along new fields of ideals." The author has also studied senescence and his remarks on it are interesting. The charts of the book have been neatly drawn and the graphs skilfully plotted.

B. G. Ray.

BATIK: By Haimanti Chakravarty.

Published by Visva-Bharati. Price Rupee One.

THE monograph under review by Mrs. Haimanti Chakravarty is the first of a series of technical studies to be published under the auspices of the Silpabhavana, Sriniketan. The book, though not primarily an original work, has eased the difficulties of the cotton-printers and Bātik-artisans. It is also a delightful handbook for the amateur craftsman and for the lay-public, specially the women of our household, who want to make Bātik in their houses. Beauty as well as utility are served by the spread of handicrafts, and this book will be an incentive to our younger generation. In the Introduction the author has traced the rebirth of Bātik at Santiniketan and has acknowledged her debt to the Dutch and German books on Bātik. Santiniketan and Sriniketan, the centre of India's cultural renaissance, were naturally the pioneers in practising the Bātik art, which is now slowly spreading in India. Indeed, the Bātik designs and processes have been given a new orientation by the Visvabharati and lovely Bātik sarees made there as well as Bātik designs on leatherwork now hold the premier position in the market. A new taste has been created, and the level of artistic excellence has definitely been raised in our country. Evidently, the making of silken and cotton pieces, sarees, table-cloths, bags, etc. is an economic and even profitable avocation, and the Visvabharati has done an immense service in demonstrating this. This book will help in educating the public and bring the hitherto inaccessible processes of the Bātik within reach of our people.

Throughout the book, the author has focussed her attention on the

technical side of Bātik-making and her exposition of the six gradual stages, viz. washing, boiling, seaming, wringing and kneading in oil and potash, starching and pounding, is very exhaustive. She has spared no pains to make the treatise intelligible to the artisans not only with regard to the different painting processes, but also in respect of the different ingredients. Very often the author compares one ingredient with the other and always specifies the best ones. The book is written in simple English and in so lucid a style that the readers will have no difficulty in learning the exact details of Bātik-painting and dyeing.

To the student of the history of Indian painting, the book suggests several fascinating parallels. For instance, on p. 8 we find, "In S. India the process (of drawing the pattern) . . . is first to draw it on paper." From Sanskrit texts we get something similar, though this is of course no longer known to our public. In drawing the patterns of wall paintings, the *Abhilaṣitārtha Cintāmaṇi*, a S. Indian compilation of the 12th century A.D. recommends drawing the pattern on the floor. The first outline is drawn in black which is a speciality of the S. Indian artists. *Silparatna*, a S. Indian book (compilation) of the 16th century A.D. recommends black outlining with regard to the wall-paintings. A bamboo-stick with iron-nibs is used for the application of colours. A similar one with copper-nibs is recommended in the *Abhilaṣitārtha Cintāmaṇi*. So even in these details the old Indian craftsman practised techniques very much like those employed in Bātik.

When tracing with wax the artisan employed in Bātik work should remove the excess wax by means of a knife—an instrument whose use for a similar purpose is also recommended in the *Abhilaṣitārtha Cintāmaṇi*. The author's discussion on the prospect of development of indigenous dyes is noteworthy, especially in these days when foreign dyes and colours can no more be imported. Let us hope that some Indian colour-making concern will take up her ideas and experiment on indigenous dyes. These should then be placed in the market. Perhaps the Sriniketan Art and Crafts Department is already doing this.

Printing and other mistakes are rare. A ton is 27½ mds., 1 seer is 2½ lbs. In the next edition the author will perhaps take up the most interesting topic as to how the once similar Bātik-processes in S. India and Java came to follow divergent paths.

The book is inexpensive and excellently produced. The appearance of the coloured picture of a typical Bātik design on the cover adds to its attractiveness.

Jibendra Kumar Guha.

THAT OF GOD IN EVERY MAN : Edited by Ranjit M. Chetsingh, M. A.
 (To be had from the Warden, Friends' Settlement, Hoshangabad, C. P.
 Pp. 72. Price : ten annas, post free).

THIS is "a simple statement", as the sub-title of the book says, "of the faith and practice of the Quakers (Society of Friends)", presented in the shape of six short articles which have been contributed by such prominent members of the Society, as Messrs. Carl Heath and Horace G. Alexander, and some of their fellow-friends working in India.

Centuries ago Christ said to His followers, "I have called ye friends." Likewise the Quakers proclaim that the whole of humanity is their friend and so they love it and make this love "fruitful in acts of service". Thus, the Quaker Movement is primarily a body of peace-makers who, though they receive inspiration and wisdom and strength in their life and labours from Christ, yet welcome all of whatever nation and religion "who become obedient to the light and testimony of God in their hearts." For this purpose, they keep scrupulously clear of such sacraments and set or "circumscribed" places of worship or dogmas and codes of conduct as are likely to separate them from others. Believing as they do that God is love and "that of God is in every one", they try to evoke the latter, lying latent in every individual, by constant communion with Him in His Christ aspect in their hearts, on the one hand, and self-consecration to the service of all, on the other. They are, in other words, practical mystics who are in the forefront of all good and true causes,—for instance, reconciliation between race and race, relief to the diseased and the destitute, assertion of right as against might, of peace as against war, of freedom as against slavery.

In a sense, the Quaker Movement points to the religion of the future when transcending the antagonism of all "isms" man shall greet man in the name of all-embracing Love and be his friend and fellow-worker in the service of the world. For, then every one will "quake in the fear of the Lord" and be quickened.

There are also three useful appendices, which will help the reader to contact the message and methods of the Society of Friends more fully, should he so desire.

G. M.

WIVES OF FAMOUS MEN : By Ela Sen.

(Thacker & Co., Ltd. Calcutta. Price : Rs. 4/4)

ELA SEN is to be congratulated on having written a readable and interesting book with very inconspicuous material at her disposal. Handled by a less capable writer, the dull lives of the wives of famous men,—they are mostly house-wives to their husbands,—would have made terribly dull reading. Out of a dozen depicted in the book, there are hardly three who would by themselves attract the attention of the world at large. The material is inconspicuous in another sense too,—there is very little information about the characters ; at least beyond that generally found in a standard *Who's Who*. Mrs. Churchill, however, happens to be a favoured exception, for are we not even told that “with changing times, age and maturity, Mrs. Churchill dresses her hair on top in clusters of chic grey curls” ?

I congratulate the author on her shrewd discernment in naming the book *WIVES OF FAMOUS MEN* and not *WIVES OF GREAT MEN*, for some of the husbands are merely famous without, in any way, being great.

The articles were published serially in the Calcutta *Statesman* and they therefore have both the quality as well as weakness of journalistic fare. The book is, on the one hand, very pleasant and easy reading, but, on the other, suffers unavoidably from a lack of plan and balance. No matter what derivatively great dame was under survey, the author had only a pre-allotted space for her in the *Statesman* to portray.

A. K. C.

PERVERSITIES : By G. L. M.

Published by Gaganveharilal Mehta,

100 Clive Street, Calcutta. Price Rs. 2/-

OUR distinguished countryman Mr. Gaganveharilal Mehta has the uncanny gift of looking at things aright “from wrong angles” and of expressing wisdom in the form of perversities. It is amazing that in the midst of a busy and successful commercial career, he should have found time to sit at leisure, look at the world through the wrong side of the telescope and then put down his observations in well-balanced and light English. The last perhaps is the most difficult of achievements, for, whereas it is comparatively easy to compose grand declamations in a foreign language, few succeed in bringing out a lighter note.

They say, great men often think alike and G. L. M. should have the satisfaction of finding his "perverse" thoughts in the articles "The Congress is Always Wrong" almost echoed word by word by Mr. Amery in some of his most widely applauded speeches in the British House of Commons. Plagiarism on the part of the Right Honourable gentleman is however not suggested.

There is one word by way of criticism ; most of the articles were written long ago,—some are nearly a decade old,—and as they all deal with current topics, they do not all read fresh today.

A. K. C.

THE WELL OF THE PEOPLE : By Bharati Sarabhai.

Published by Visvabharati. Price : Rs. 2/-

OF all human problems, that of communication is perhaps the most fundamental. Out of misunderstanding is born conflict, not only between races but also between individuals. All social maladjustments are the result of misunderstanding and, in the last analysis, misunderstanding is nothing but a failure in communication. Art which is pure communication is therefore a basic ingredient of life, individual, communal and social. Whatever be its other preoccupations, a person, a society or a nation that ignores or neglects art, does so at its own peril.

This is the thought which first came to me on reading Bharati Sarabhai's book. Our politics has in recent years become shrill and jaded, and often one feels that the results are not commensurate with the effort, the devotion and the sacrifice. For let no one minimise the bravery and the endurance of India and her chosen leader. Bharati Sarabhai with a true poet's intuition has seen that here also failure in communication is the reason behind our tardy progress. Accumulations of different and heavily developed civilisations pull in different directions and our problem today is the eternal problem of India, perhaps one might say, the eternal problem of humanity. In other climes and atmospheres, geographic as well as human, the old order hath yielded place to the new which supplanted it. Here in India, the attempt has been made to hold all of them simultaneously in one synthesis. Different periods, tempers and civilisations are here telescoped into one fantastic whole. Communication in such a context is well-nigh impossible and the many ills from which we suffer are merely outward symptoms of an inner failure in communication.

Bharati Sarabhai has made it her task to attempt a new integration of our diverse modes of life. The centrifugal variety has been enhanced by the clash of an alien domination. Indian life lies in scattered fragments whose reunion demands a new spiritual vision and energy. Bharati Sarabhai reminds us once more that no re-integration is possible till new channels of communication have been established and this can be achieved only through an art that is conscious of the variety as well as the deep underlying unity of Indian life. We cannot afford to forget either the torment of the present or the solace which lies beyond.

THE WELL OF THE PEOPLE is the statement of the synthesis that she has felt. Communication of such an experience is always difficult and the more so in an alien medium. It is to her great credit that she succeeds as well as she does, and yet I have a feeling that she would succeed even more in her mothertongue. Modern English poetic usage suffers from oversensitiveness in its fear of appearing imitative or conventional and it seems to me that Bharati Sarabhai has allowed herself to be at times unduly influenced by what after all is a disease in poetic consciousness. Great poetry is never afraid to be trite, commonplace or repetitive, and the poet in Bharati Sarabhai has not flinched from the use of old images, symbolism or tradition. The boldness of the conception which makes the well of an old woman the well of the people is also seen in the strength of the imagination which is able to fuse her own personality into that of the old woman and the longings of her own generation into those of the dumb and inarticulate millions. She has a truly representative mind and her work will gain still more in strength and depth when she discards the trappings of fastidious and over-intellectualised modernistic English verse.

The get-up and production of the book is fully in keeping with its artistic excellence.

Humayun Kabir

